KNUCKLES AND GLOVES

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

GLAMOUR
CAKE
UNOFFICIAL
THE COMPLETE GENTLEMAN
THE TENDER CONSCIENCE
FORGOTTEN REALMS

MAX BEERBOHM IN PERSPECTIVE

THE COMPLETE AMATEUR BOXER

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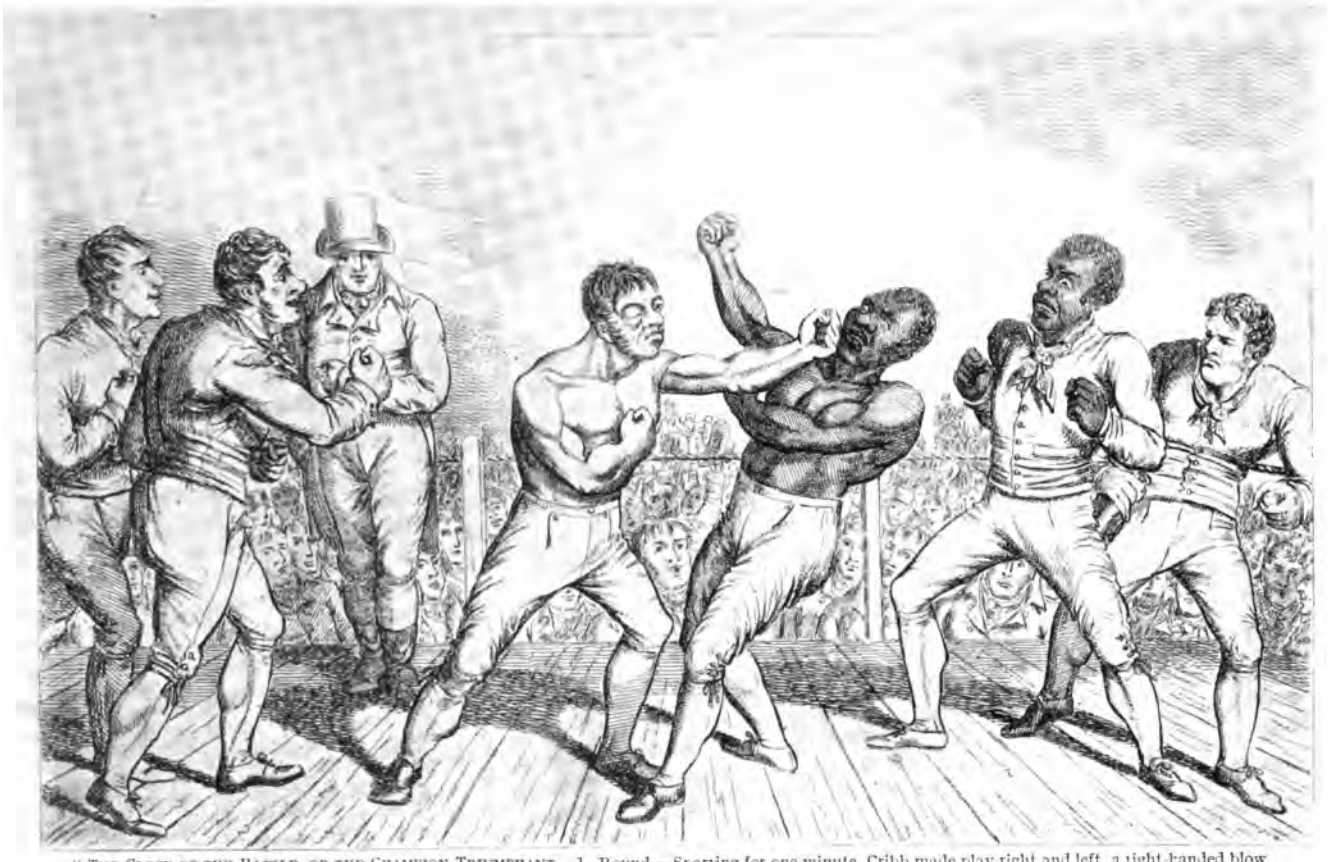

"THE CLOSE OF THE BATTLE, OR THE CHAMPION TRIUMPHANT. 1. Round.—Sparring for one minute, Cribb made play right and left, a right-handed blow told slightly on the body of Molineux, who returned it on the head, and a rally followed, the Black knocked down by a hit on the throat. 2.—Cribb showed first blood from the mouth, a dreadful rally, Cribb put in a good body-hit, returned by the Moor on the head. Closing, Cribb thrown. 3.—Cribb's right eye nearly closed, another rally, the Black deficient in wind receives a doubler in the body. Cribb damaged in both eyes and thrown. 4.—Rally, hits exchanged. Cribb fell with a slight hit and manifested first weakness. 5.—Rallying renewed. Cribb fell from a blow and received another in falling. 6.—The Black, fatigued by want of wind, a blow at the body-mark doubles him up, and is floored by a hit at great length. 7.—Black runs in intemperately, receives several violent blows about the neck and juggler, falls from weakness. 8.—Black rallies, Cribb nobs him, gets his head under his left arm, and just fibbed till the Moor fell. 9.—Black runs in, met with a left-handed blow which broke his jaw, and fell like a log. 10.—Black, with difficulty, made an unsuccessful effort and fell from distress. 11.—This round ended the fight. Black received another knock-down and unable again to stand up."

Frontispiece.

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KNUCKLES AND GLOVES

BY

BOHUN LYNCH

WITH A PREFACE BY

SIR THEODORE COOK

Illustrated

LONDON: 48 PALL MALL
W. COLLINS SONS & CO. LTD.
GLASGOW MELBOURNE AUCKLAND

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To H. G. B. L.

Though I deplore the pain you felt
  When you had broken my command,
  And I had taken you in hand,
Planting my blows beneath your belt,
  I like to think of future years
When skin that's fair shall change to brown,
When 'listed in a fairer fight,
  You shall return to others' ears
Blows straightly dealt with left and right,
Blows you encountered lower down!

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PREFACE

In the brickwork of a well-known London house, not far from Covent Garden, there is a stone with the date, 1636, which was cut by the order of Alexander, Earl of Stirling. It formed part of a building which sheltered successively Tom Killigrew, Denzil Hollis, and Sir Henry Vane; and that great kaleidoscope of a quack, a swordsman, and a horse-breaker, Sir Kenelm Digby, died in it. Within its walls was summoned the first Cabinet Council ever held in England, by Admiral Russel, Earl of Orford. Its members belonged to a set of jovial sportsmen, of whom Lord Wharton and Lord Godolphin may be taken as excellent types. About the same time, out of the mob that peoples Hogarth's pictures, out of the faces with which Fielding and Smollett have made us familiar, and in a society for which Samuel Richardson alternately blushed and sighed, arose the rough but manly form of Figg, the better educated but equally lusty figure of Broughton, who first taught "the mystery of boxing, that truly British art" at his academy in the Haymarket in 1747.

But, unfortunately, the beginnings of prize-fighting, or boxing for money with bare fists, were more romantic than its subsequent career, for it lived on brutality and it died of boredom. The house near Covent Garden has become the National Sporting Club. Knuckles have been replaced by gloves. To-day we see Carpentier knock his man out scientifically in less than a single round, instead of watching Tom Sayers, with one arm, fighting the Benicia Boy, and only getting a draw after two hours and twenty minutes. Mr. Bohun Lynch's description of the battle is one of the best I have ever read, and he gives full credit to each man for the fine spirit shown throughout an encounter in which neither asked for mercy and neither expected any.

On the afternoon of June 16, 1904, there was sold in King

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Street, Covent Garden, the belt presented to J. C. Heenan (who was called the Benicia Boy from the San Francisco workshops, where he was employed) after the great fight was over. It was a duplicate of the championship belt, and it bore the same title as that presented at the same time to Sayers: "Champion of England." The price it fetched in 1904 was, I fear, a true reflection of the interest now taken in its original owner and his pugilistic surroundings; and it is difficult to recall the celebrity of both from those past years when Tom Sayers seemed to share with the Duke of Wellington the proud title of Britain's greatest hero. But it is not really so astonishing when we remember that the plucky little Hoxton bricklayer stood to the youth of his era as the gamest representative of almost the only form of sport the larger public knew or cared about. In days when golf, lawn-tennis, cricket, football, and the rest not only multiply our sporting stars almost indefinitely, but attract crowds numbered by scores of thousands to applaud them, we do not seem to pitch upon the boxer as our especially typical representative of national sporting skill. There may be other reasons for that, too. English boxers seem to have only retained their characteristic style long enough to hand it on to others; they then proceeded to forget it. When Jem Mace left off boxing in England he went to Australia, and in Sydney he taught Larry Foley, who in turn educated Peter Jackson, Fitzsimmons, Hall, Creedon, and Young Griffo. The first two handed on the lighted torch to the United States. The result was soon obvious. When the Americans came over they beat us at all weights from Peter Jackson downwards, and they beat us because they had learnt from us what one of the best exponents of the art has called "velocity and power of hitting combined with quickness and ease of movement on the feet"; I should like to add to that, "the straight left," or as it is more classically known, "Long Melford."

No doubt the best of the old fighters now and then produced a fine and manly example of human fortitude and skill. "If I were absolute king," wrote Thackeray in a famous Roundabout Paper after the Sayers and Heenan fight, "I would send Tom

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Sayers to the mill for a month and make him Sir Thomas on coming out of Clerkenwell." I am tempted in this connection to reproduce what must be one of the few letters Tom Sayers ever wrote. It was caused by a public discussion after his famous fight, which is little short of amazing when we look back at it. The newspapers were filled with frenzied denunciations, Parliament angrily discussed the question, Palmerston quoted, with every sign of satisfaction, a French journalist who saw in the contest "a type of the national character for indomitable perseverance in determined effort," and then (cannot you see his smiling eyes above the semi-serious mouth?) proceeded to draw a contrast between pugilism and ballooning, very much to the disadvantage of the latter. A correspondent wrote to the Press inquiring indignantly whether it were true that the Duke of Beaufort, the Earl of Eglinton, and the Bishop of Oxford had attended "this most disgraceful exhibition." Tom Sayers, roused to unwonted penmanship, retorted in the *Daily Telegraph* as follows:—"In answer to your correspondent, I beg to state that neither bishop nor peer was present at the late encounter. It is from a pure sense of justice that I write you this. I scarcely think it reasonable that such repeated onslaughts should be made on me and my friend, Heenan. Trusting you will insert this in your widely-circulated and well-regulated journal, allow me to remain, yours faithfully, Thomas Sayers, Cambrian Stores, Castle Street, Leicester Square, April 21, 1860." The Stock Exchange had given him a purse of a hundred guineas that afternoon, so you need scarcely wonder at the urbanity of his language. In the House of Commons, meanwhile, the Home Secretary had been calling forth cheerful expressions of hilarity by reminding those members who had witnessed the battle that they might be indicted for misdemeanour, though he was pleased to add that fighting with fists was in his opinion better than the use of the bowie-knife, the stiletto, or the shillelagh.

I can remember Mr. Lynch's boxing for his University, and the severe discomfort he occasioned his Cambridge adversary; and when I recall the many excellent books (on different subjects)

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which he has previously given us, I see in him an author who has not only the knowledge but the skill to produce that requisite blend of literature and experience which can alone commend the subject of his volume to the English-speaking public. I wish I could claim as much myself. But I suffered from the educational advantage of having a younger brother who knocked me down (and often "out") with the greatest kindliness and persistence whenever we put on the gloves together; and being overmuch puffed up with pride at finding I could stand so much of it, I rashly took on a guardsman so considerably my superior that after three rounds I was never allowed to box again, and had to quench my thirst for personal combat in ensuing years with foil and duelling-sword. My brother died suddenly of a fever when he was in training under Bat Mullens for the Amateur Championship, and only twenty-one. He was six feet three and thirteen stone stripped, and I never saw an amateur I thought his better until Hopley came into the ring for Cambridge; and no one ever knew how good Hopley was, for no one ever stood in the ring with him for more than two minutes, and he retired, like St. Simon (I mean, of course, the Duke of Portland's thoroughbred) as undefeated as he was unextended.

Another very good fight in Mr. Lynch's book (and I have never read a better analysis of the technical "knock-out" than the one he gives on page 126) is that between Peter Jackson and Frank Slavin. I saw it, so I can correct a slight verbal error (foreseen in his own footnote) in Mr. Lynch's pages. Mr. Angle (I have his letter before me) did not say "Fight on" at that dreadful moment when the packed house could scarcely breathe; when Slavin was tottering blindly to and fro, refusing to give in; when Peter looked out at us appealingly, with the native chivalry that shone through his black skin, and evidently hated to continue. The referee's quiet syllables, "*Box on*," sounded like a minute-gun at sea, and in a few moments it was all over. When Slavin was brought round in his dressing-room, and told he had been knocked out, he muttered, "They'll never believe that in Melbourne."

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There must have been something about the old prize-ring which we have lost to-day, or it would never have inspired such good literature or attracted such brilliant men in its support. Byron's screen in Mr. John Murray's drawing-room is far from the only testimony to that dazzling poet's love of fighting. Hazlitt was almost equally attracted. Perhaps the most grisly passage even in the pages of De Quincy is that episode in the first part of "Murder as One of the Fine Arts," where the fight between the amateur and the baker of Mannheim (with its result) is vividly described. The best pages of Borrow, too, gain their best inspiration from the same source. I often seem to recall that pair of dark eyes flashing in a fair face shaded by hair that was prematurely touched with grey; lips full and mobile, as quick with Castilian phrases to a Spanish landlord as with Romany to Jasper Petulengro, or with English to the fruit-woman on London Bridge; the queer, fascinating, mystical, honest mixture of a man, with something of the Wandering Jew, a good deal of Don Quixote, a touch of Melmoth, a sound flavouring of Cribb and Belcher, who was George Borrow. Under his magic guidance you step into the air which fanned the elf-locks of the Flaming Tinman. He loved the heroes of the Ring like brothers. "He strikes his foe on the forehead, and the report of the blow is like the sound of a hammer against a rock." The sentence stands unmatched in all the annals of pugilism. The battle of his father with Big Ben Brain in Hyde Park was an abiding memory to him; and, apart from the famous encounter in the Dingle, the son did almost as well; and all his life nothing moved him to such instant eloquence as boxing, except horses.

Mr. Lynch, with all his knowledge of the art, and all his sympathy with the best qualities in the men whose combats he portrays, cannot conceal from us that on the whole the old prize-ring was brutal and the modern "pugilistic contest" between professionals has very little that is attractive. Yet he is right both to put them on record and to tell the truth about them without fear or favour. For at the very heart of their foundations is an ineradicable and a noble instinct of the human race. Even a

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Dempsey, earning several thousand pounds a minute, may be dimly conscious that he is building better than he knows. Professionals in any game who attain a height of skill which gives them a practically unlimited market for what they have to sell, can scarcely be blamed by stockbrokers who gamble on a falling market, or by profiteers who battened on the war. Even the modern professional boxer cannot do permanent harm to the true atmosphere of the great game in which he shines briefly like a passing meteor. It is pages like these from Mr. Lynch that should inspire the professional to give us his best and leave aside the worst in what is, after all, only an epitome of life, a show in which the blows are seen instead of hidden, in which rewards or losses are known to all the world instead of silently concealed. There is a spirit in Boxing which nothing can destroy, and while we cherish it among amateurs, the professional will never be able to defile it.

Mr. E. B. Michell, an old pupil of my father's, and the only boxer who ever held three of the amateur championships at different weights, is still with us; and I should still do my best to prevent any friend from wantonly attacking him. Like all real fighters, he has always been the kindliest of men, the most difficult to provoke to extremes. But any one who has managed to extract from his diffidence those few occasions when he had to use his fists, because no other course was possible, will realise that boxing is not merely a splendid form of recreation, but one of the finest systems of self-defence ever developed by persistent effort.

Julian Grenfell's famous poem, "Into Battle," was written in the Trenches the day after he had fought the champion of his division in France; and there were few who read it who did not recall that previous victory of his over Tye, the fireman, which will never be forgotten in Johannesburg. Three times he was laid on his back. In the third round he knocked the fireman out, "and he never moved for twenty seconds. . . . I was 11 st. 4 lb., and he was 11 st. 3 lb. I think it was the best fight I shall ever have." He found a better in the Ypres Salient, and again he

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wrote:—" I cannot tell you how wonderful our men were, going straight for the first time into a fierce fire. They surpassed my utmost expectations. I have never been so fit or nearly so happy in my life before." For such men it is impossible to sorrow. These brothers and their comrades were taken from us in the full noon of their splendid sunlight; and on its fiercest throb of high endeavour the brave heart of each one of them stopped beating. Their memories stand, to me, for all that may be meant, achieved, or promised in such courage, such endurance, aye, such instantaneous cataclysm as Mr. Bohun Lynch's chapters at their best recall. His tale has obviously a sordid side, yet more evidently a brutal one. But the red thread of honourable resolution runs through the warp and woof of it; and these are not days when we may dare to minimise the value of the pluck that conquers pain.

THEODORE A. COOK.

June, 1922.

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NOTE

Certain passages in this book, notably in the Introduction, and in the second part, dealing with recent contests, are substantially based, and in some instances literally culled, from articles which I wrote for *The Daily Chronicle*, *The Field*, *Land and Water*, *The Outlook*, and *The London Mercury*; and to the editors of these journals I owe my best thanks for much kindness and consideration.

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INTRODUCTION

SPORTS and games may be classified as natural and artificial. Running, jumping, and swimming, for example, are natural sports, though, to be sure, much artifice is required to assure in them especial excellence. In these simple instances it is merely directed to avoid waste of energy. Boxing is one of the artificial sports, and has never been, like wrestling, anything else. In the far distant past the primitive man, with no weapon handy, no doubt clutched and hugged and clawed at his immediate enemies, just as children, who are invariably primitive until they are taught "better," clutch and claw to-day. That natural and instinctive grasping and hugging was the forefather of subtle and tricky wrestling, whether Greek, Roman, or North-country English, but as far as we can discover the earliest use of fisticuffs was for sport alone. It may seem natural to hit a man you hate, but it is only second nature, and any one but a trained boxer is apt to seize him by the throat. The employment of fists as weapons of offence and of arms for shields developed from the sport. As such, too, it is very effectual, especially when combined with a knowledge of wrestling, but only when the enemy is of similar mind. I am informed by a former Honorary Secretary of the Oxford University Boxing Club, who from this point of view ruthlessly criticised a former book of mine on the subject, and who has spent many years in close contact with uncivilisation, that boxing is of extremely little value against a man with a broken bottle or a spanner—let alone an armed cannibal.

The praises of boxing as a practical means of self-defence have been, perhaps, too loudly sung. A boy at school may earn for himself a certain reputation, may establish a funk amongst his fellows owing to his quickness and agility with or without the gloves; but in practice he seldom has a chance of employing his

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skill against his enemies. On the other hand, a small boy who comes in contact for the first time with another's skill (or even brutality) receiving a blow in the face, invariably cries, "Beastly cad!" because a blow in the face hurts him.

You have to accept this convention of sportsmanlike warfare, like others, before you can make it work. And the Love of Fair Play of which we have heard so much in the past is quite artificial too. It is not really inherent in human nature. Like other moralities it has to be taught, and it is very seldom taught with success. Let us say, not unreasonably, that you begin to take an interest in boxing as a boy. You hear about various fights—at least you do nowadays, and you want to imitate the fighters, just as in the same way but at a different moment you want to be an engine-driver, or an airman, or the Principal Boy in *Robinson Crusoe*, when your young attention is drawn to such occupations. When I was a small boy (if, in order to illustrate a point, a short excursion into autobiography may be forgiven me), the last flicker of the Prize-Ring had, so to put it, just expired, and glove-fighting was not then perhaps a pretty business. A curiosity which, not being skilled in the science and practice of psycho-analysis, I can only ascribe to spontaneous generation, and the fact that Tom Sayers once invested my mother, then a little girl, with his champion's belt at a village fair—this curiosity impelled me to desire, from a railway bookstall, the purchase on my behalf of a shilling book called *The Art of Self-Defence*, by one Ned Donelly. It was, I believe, the very first work of its peculiar and spurious kind—that is, a handbook with or without merit (this one had several, notably that of brevity), written by a sporting reporter and inscribed by the pugilist. I had some difficulty in getting that gift, but when I did I devoured the book from gray paper cover to cover. I knew it almost all by heart once. I remember now that Ned Donelly said he had fought under the auspices of Nat Langham, and I wondered what auspices meant, and I wonder now if Ned Donelly knew. Later, in the mid-nineties, *Rodney Stone* appeared in the pages of "The Strand Magazine," and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whilst admitting that rascality was known in

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connection with the Prize-Ring, yet showed how the Great Tradition of the British Love of Fair Play in the face of the most reprehensible practices maintained itself. All literature which touched the subject, all conversation with elder persons led me to believe that this desire of Fair Play was inseparable from the British composition (though seldom found outside these islands), and that if one had a quarrel at school an adjournment was immediately made to some secret trysting-place, where boys formed a ring, a timekeeper and referee were appointed, and you and your opponent nobly contended until one—the one who was in the wrong, of course—gave in.

It wasn't until I wished to have a fair, stand-up fight with another boy—with a succession of other boys—that I found a somewhat serious flaw in the great Tradition, and that at one of the "recognised" public schools. The other boy might or might not stand up straight in front, but half a dozen other boys would invariably hang on behind—me. In the end I managed to bring off two fair fights, one with another boy of like mind who, cold-blooded and conversational, walked with me to a secluded field; the other by means of a ruse. I had challenged this adversary again and again. With derision, he refused to fight me. Once I attacked him in public, but was very soon made to see sense, as well as stars, for he hit me at his own convenience whilst his partisans held my arms. The merits of the quarrel I entirely forget. You may be sure that they were trivial. I will readily admit that both of us were horrible little beasts (though I admit it the more readily of him) in the certain knowledge that boys of our age, excepting those who happen to read this, almost always are. So I waited my opportunity, and one evening I caught my enemy alone reading a paper on a notice-board. I came behind him with stealth, and I kicked him hard, and I then ran away. And he did exactly what I had, rather confidently, expected him to do. He thought me an arrant coward, and he followed fast. I led him to a safe and secluded passage, well lit, at the top of some stairs where there was just room for a close encounter. We should not be interrupted by any one. I waited for him to get on a level

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with me. I have seldom enjoyed anything so much as the next two minutes or so. I hated that boy very much. The score against him was a long one. Moralists (who are always dishonest in their methods of propaganda) tell us that revenge turns to gall and bitterness. . . . Oh, does it? The sheer physical delight in thrashing some one I hated, some one rather bigger and heavier than myself, too, which made it all the better, has lived on in sweet retrospect. There was no "hearty handshake" or anything pretty of that sort. It was simple, downright bashing, and it was delicious. And, not to please the moralist but to record a fact, the air really was cleared. We did shake hands afterwards, and all rancour was gone—at least from me: and for ever after we were quite, though perhaps coldly, civil to each other, and my late adversary is now a Lieutenant-Colonel, D.S.O., and I think (but am not sure) C.M.G.

The Love of Fair Play, then, where hate is involved, needs a great deal of teaching. I am not trying, in the instance quoted above, to make a case for myself as a lover of fair play in those days. The difference between my enemy and me was chiefly a difference in vanity. He was content to annoy me without risk of hurt or chance of glory. I was ready to stake a bit in order that my victory should be complete for my own smug self-satisfaction. He was the practical fellow: I was the sentimentalist.

Boxing of a kind is the earliest artificial sport of which we have any record, and the earliest record, and from the literary point of view, the best of all time is, though we are not concerned with it here, Greek.

As far as can be discovered there is no tale of any boxing between the gradually debased sport of the ancients and the institution of the British Prize-Ring early in the eighteenth century. And it was not until a hundred years or more later that boxing began to take its place as a topic in polite letters. Under that head it is difficult to include *Boxiana*, or *Sketches of Antient and Modern*

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Pugilism, from the days of the renowned Broughton and Slack to the championship of Crib. This was written by Pierce Egan, the inventor of "Tom and Jerry," and dedicated to Captain Barclay, the famous trainer of pugilists. The first volume was published in 1818. Egan, like many later writers, was often upon the defensive, and was ever upon the alert to find excuses for the noble art. He constantly drew attention to the fact that, whilst Italians used stilettos and Frenchmen engaged in duels *à la mort*, the Briton has the good sense to settle a dispute with his fists. Egan frankly disliked refinement, but he does recognise in boxing something better than refinement.

The same point of view is implicit in M. Mæterlinck's discussion of modern boxing.[1]

> ". . . synthetic, irresistible, unimprovable blows. As soon as one of them touches the adversary, the fight is ended, to the complete satisfaction of the conqueror, who triumphs so incontestably, and with no dangerous hurt to the conquered, who is simply reduced to impotence and unconsciousness during the time needed for all ill-will to evaporate."

To return to Pierce Egan, *Blackwood's Magazine* for March, 1820, goes in (if the prevalent metaphor of precisely a hundred years later may be allowed) off the deep end in reviewing *Boxiana:*—

> "It is sufficient justification of Pugilism to say—Mr. Egan is its historian. . . . He has all the eloquence and feeling of a *Percy*—all the classical grace and inventive ingenuity of a *Warton*—all the enthusiasm and zeal of a *Headley*—all the acuteness and vigour of a *Ritson*—all the learning and wit of an *Ellis*—all the delicacy and discernment of a *Campbell*; and, at the same time, his style is perfectly his own, and likely to remain so, for it is as inimit-

[1] "In Praise of the Fist," from *Life and Flowers*, translated by the late Alexander Teixeira de Mattos.

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able as it is excellent. The man who has not read *Boxiana* is ignorant of the power of the English language."

If ever responsible overstatement reached the border-line of sheer dementia it is here. But for the sake of politeness, let us content ourselves with saying, further, that the reviewer's enthusiasm got the better of his judgment. What matters to us now is that Pierce Egan made a record of the old Prize Ring which is invaluable. So that we are not concerned so much with his literary distinction as with his accuracy as a chronicler, and, as other records of contemporary events are either scarce, or, as in some cases, totally lacking, it is not easy to check his accounts.

From internal evidence, we know at the first glance at *Boxiana* that we must be careful; for Egan shouts his praises of almost all pugilists upon the same note. And all of them cannot have been as good as all that! This author was a passionate admirer of the noble art and of the men who followed it, and it is his joyous zeal (apart from the matters of fact which he tells us) that make him worth reading. For the rest we must regard him as we are, nowadays, prone to regard most historians, and make such allowance as we see fit for inevitable exaggerations. That, on one occasion at least, he was deliberately inaccurate, we shall see later on.

There was a delightful simplicity about the old boxing matches. The men fought to a finish; that is, until one or other of them failed to come up to the scratch, chalked in the mid-ring, or until the seconds or backers gave in for them, which last does not appear to have happened very often. A round ended with a knock-down or a fall from wrestling, and half a minute only was allowed for rest and recovery.

One of the illustrations in this book is taken from a print of the original Rules governing Prize-Fights, "as agreed by several gentlemen at Broughton's Amphitheatre, Tottenham Court Road, August, 16th, 1743."

These Rules were as follows:—

I.—That a square of a Yard be chalked in the middle of the

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Stage; and on each fresh set-to after a fall, or being from the rails, each Second is to bring his Man to the side of the Square, and place him opposite to the other, and until they are fairly set-to at the Lines, it shall not be lawful for one to strike at the other.

II.—That, in order to prevent any Disputes, the time a Man lies after a fall, if the Second does not bring his Man to the side of the square, within the space of half a minute, he shall be deemed a beaten Man.

III.—That in every Main Battle, no person whatever shall be upon the Stage, except the Principals and their Seconds; the same rule to be observed in bye-battles, except that in the latter Mr. Broughton is allowed to be upon the Stage to keep decorum, and to assist Gentlemen in getting to their places, provided always he does not interfere in the Battle; and whoever pretends to infringe these Rules to be turned immediately out of the house. Everybody is to quit the Stage as soon as the Champions are stripped, before the set-to.

IV.—That no Champion be deemed beaten, unless he fails coming up to the line in the limited time, or that his own Second declares him beaten. No Second is to be allowed to ask his Man's adversary any questions, or advise him to give out.

V.—That in Bye-battles, the winning man have two-thirds of the Money given, which shall be publicly divided upon the Stage, notwithstanding private agreements to the contrary.

VI.—That to prevent Disputes, in every Main Battle the Principals shall, on coming to the Stage, choose from among the gentlemen present two Umpires, who shall absolutely decide all Disputes that may arise about the Battle; and if the two Umpires cannot agree, the said Umpires to choose a third, who is to determine it.

VII.—That no person is to hit his Adversary when he is down, or seize him by the ham, the breeches, or any part below the waist; a man on his knees to be reckoned down.

It will be seen that all contingencies are by no means covered by these regulations, but in those days far more was left to the

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judgment and discretion of the Umpires and the Referee. Spectators, even "interested" onlookers who had plunged on the event, were usually willing to abide by their decisions; and, as a general thing, though there was more elbow-room for rascality than in later times, the men fought fairly. Anyhow, Egan says that they did.

Whether the death of bare-knuckle fighting is to be mourned is not a question to be dealt with in the first chapter. As George Borrow observed very many years ago, "These are not the days of pugilism," and without attempting any discussion of the rights and wrongs of the general problem, we may yet read the annals of the Ring and draw our own conclusions from particular instances. The "days of pugilism" are unlikely to return.

It is not, indeed, until we come to George Borrow that we find the praises of boxing sung as a sport, as an outlet for energy, as pure good fun. It is true that, being Borrow, he tells us in *Romany Rye* of a character who regarded it "as a great defence against Popery." But Borrow, when he left Popery alone, had a splendid, "Elizabethan" and full-blooded view of life, whether he was concerned with the pleasures of milling or the "genial and gladdening power of good ale, the true and proper drink of Englishmen."

> "Can you box?" asks the old magistrate in *Lavengro*. "I tell you what, my boy: I honour you. . . . Boxing is, as you say, a noble art—a truly English art; may I never see the day when Englishmen shall feel ashamed of it, or blacklegs and blackguards bring it into disgrace! I am a magistrate, and, of course, cannot patronise the thing very openly, yet I sometimes see a prize-fight."
>
> "All I have to say," Borrow continues later on in *Lavengro*, "is, that the French still live on the other side of the water, and are still casting their eyes hitherward—and that in the days of pugilism it was no vain boast to say, that one Englishman was a match for two of t'other race."

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What would he have said had he lived to see a French champion? The two words, "boxing" and "Frenchman," within half a mile of each other, so to put it, made a stock joke in those days and for long after, even to within recent memory.

Borrow had the true boxer's joy in a fight for its own sake, the violent exercise, the sense of personal contest which is more manifest in fisticuffs than in any other sport.

> "Dosta," says Jasper Petulengro, "we'll now go to the tents and put on the gloves; and I'll try to make you feel what a sweet thing it is to be alive, brother!"

The following is his account of the crowd at a prize-fight, the encounter itself being dismissed in a few lines:—

> "I think I now see them upon the bowling-green, the men of renown, amidst hundreds of people with no renown at all, who gaze upon them with timid wonder. Fame, after all, is a glorious thing, though it last only for a day. There's Cribb, the Champion of England, and perhaps the best man in England: there he is with his huge, massive figure, and a face wonderfully like that of a lion. There is Belcher, the younger . . . the most scientific pugilist who ever entered a ring. . . . Crosses him, what a contrast! Grim, savage Skelton, who has a civil word for nobody and a hard blow for anybody—hard! one blow, given with the proper play of his athletic arm, will unsense a giant. Yonder individual, who strolls about with his hands behind him, supporting his brown coat lappets, undersized, and also looks anything but what he is, is the King of the Lightweights, so-called—Randall! the terrible Randall, who has Irish blood in his veins: not the better for that, nor the worse; not far from him is his last antagonist, Ned Turner, who, though beaten by him, still thinks himself as good a man, in which he is, perhaps, right, for it was a near thing; and a better

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> 'shentleman,' in which he is quite right, for he is a Welshman. . . . There was—what! shall I name the last? Ay, why not? I believe that thou art the last of all that strong family still above the sod, where may'st thou long continue —true species of English stuff, Tom of Bedford—sharp as Winter, kind as Spring.
>
> "Hail to thee, Tom of Bedford. . . . Hail to thee, six-foot Englishman of the brown eye, worthy to have carried a six-foot bow at Flodden, where England's yeomen triumphed over Scotland's king, his clans and chivalry. Hail to thee, last of England's bruisers, after all the many victories which thou hast achieved—true English victories, unbought by yellow gold. . . ."

Borrow wrote of the Prize-Ring in its decline and of its best days from a greater distance than did Egan, and his perspective is therefore truer. Still we do learn a great deal from *Boxiana* of the old giants; whilst contemporary engravings, some of which will be found here, give us, more or less faithfully, the attitudes of the fighters. Whether the artists observed the same fidelity in regard to the muscular development of the principals we must decide from our own experience. It is often said that if men were to train themselves to this herculean scale they would be so muscle-bound as to be almost immobile.

At the beginning of Volume III. of *Boxiana*, Egan tells us of the extraordinary physique of the fighter.

> "The frames, in general, of the boxers are materially different, in point of appearance, from most other men; and they are also formed to endure *punishment* in a very severe degree. . . . The *eyes* of the pugilists are always small; but their *necks* are very fine and large; their *arms* are also muscular and athletic, with strong, well-turned shoulders. In general, the *chests* of the *Boxers* are expanded; and some of their *backs* and *loins* not only exhibit an unusual degree of strength, but a great portion of anatomical beauty. The *hips*, *thighs*,

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and *legs* of a few of the pugilists are very much to be admired for their symmetry, and there is likewise a peculiar '*sort of a something*' about the head of a boxer, which tends to give him *character*."

And he adds a footnote: "The *old Fanciers*, or 'good judges,' prefer those of a *snipe* appearance."—(An appearance which obviously could not long have been maintained!)

Of scientific boxing, as we understand it, there was comparatively little; though in the hey-day of the Prize-Ring (roughly speaking, the first quarter of the nineteenth century) the foundations of the exact science were well laid. However, the chief qualifications for a good pugilist were strength and courage, even as they are to-day. But, besides hitting, the fighters might close and wrestle, and many a hard battle was lost by a good boxer whose strength was worn out by repeated falls, falls made the more damaging when a hulking opponent threw himself, as at one time he was allowed to do, on top of him.

The other principal differences between old and modern boxing were these: it was one of a man's first considerations to hit his antagonist hard about the eyes, so that they swelled up and he could not see. Men strong and otherwise unhurt were often beaten like that. Secondly, bare knuckles, in hard repeated contact with hard heads, were apt to be "knocked up" after a time. The use of gloves, though it probably makes a knock-out easier and quicker, obviates these two difficulties. However, even with the heavy "pudden" of an eight-ounce glove, the danger to the striker, though much lessened, is not entirely avoided, and I once put out two knuckles of my left, at the same time breaking a bone at the back of my hand in contact with an opponent's elbow with which he guarded his ribs. This sort of accident is very rare.

The chief interest in the fights described by Pierce Egan and by others lies in their records of magnificent courage, for—there is really no way out of it—the old Prize-Ring was, by the prevalent standards of to-day, a somewhat brutal institution.

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Horrible cruelty was seen and enjoyed, not as a rule the cruelty of the two men engaged, fair or foul as may have been their methods, but of their backers and seconds, who, with their money on the issue, allowed a beaten man, sorely hurt, to go on fighting on the off-chance of his winning by a lucky blow. Sometimes their optimism was, within the limits of its intention, justified, and an all but beaten man did win. Really, that sort of thing happens more often in modern boxing, especially amateur boxing, to-day, than it did in the Prize-Ring, and this is due, not to the callousness of referees, but to their perspicacity. A thoroughly experienced referee understands exactly how much a man can endure, particularly when he has seen the individual in question box before. He knows that he is not nearly so much hurt and "done" as he looks, or rather as the average spectator thinks he looks; and he gives him his chance. And, suddenly, to the wild surprise of every one, except, perhaps, the referee, he puts in a "lucky" blow and knocks out an opponent who had hitherto been "all over" him.

On the other hand, a backer sometimes did withdraw his man in the most humane fashion when he had been badly punished, and very often to the deep resentment of the boxer himself, who, left to his own devices, would have fought on so long as his weakening legs would obey his iron will.

One more word upon the subject of "brutality" may be forgiven me. Again and again has it been said, but never too emphatically, how seldom it is that the men themselves were to blame. It is the hangers-on, the parasites, the vermin of sport, outside the ring, the field, the racecourse, who never risked nor meant to risk a broken nose or a thick ear, who are out for money and for money alone, by fair means for choice (as being on the whole the better policy), but by foul means readily enough rather than not at all—these are the men who bring every institution upon which they batten into bad repute. Certainly the broken ranks of this army were occasionally recruited from the less successful or the more dissipated but quite genuine fighters, just as the hired bully is not unknown amongst the boxers of to-day.

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But the real villain, the man who gets the money out of rascality, does so, if possible, with a whole skin.

The Prize-Ring served its turn. For nearly a hundred years —that is, roughly, from 1740 to 1840—it was a genuine expression of English life. Right or wrong as may have been the methods used, it was spontaneous. After that, if we except individual encounters, it was forced, laboured, and in vain. The spontaneity was gone. In his Preface to *Cashel Byron's Profession*, Mr. Shaw tells us that pugilism was supposed to have died of its own blackguardism: whereas "it lived by its blackguardism and died of its intolerable tediousness."

That is very true, but it must be remembered that the tediousness sprang very largely from the blackguardism—that is to say, towards the end of the bare-knuckle era the men used to stand off from each other, doing as little damage as possible and earning their money as easily as might be. Moreover, men who fought a "cross" were, particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, seldom good enough actors to appear beaten with any degree of plausibility, when they could, in fact, have continued fighting: and the result was that they stood about the ring, sparring in a tentative fashion, wrestling now and again, and wasting time, waiting for an opportunity to fall with some show of reality.

Thackeray, however, who, according to Mr. Shaw, loved a prize-fight as he loved a fool, appeared to think that the sport died of hypocritical respectability. There is, of course, plenty to be said upon both sides; and Thackeray's opinions will be more closely discussed in the chapter dealing with the fight between Sayers and Heenan.

Of one disease or another, or of several complications, the Prize-Ring died, and from its dust arose the gradually improving sport of glove-fighting, the boxing of to-day.

The aim of this book is to cover the ground of bare-knuckle fighting and of modern professional boxing from the inception of the Ring to the present day, by making notes upon a number of representative battles in their chronological order.

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PART I
KNUCKLES

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CHAPTER I

JOHN BROUGHTON AND JACK SLACK

THE first Boxing Champion of England of whom any record has been handed down to us was Figg. *Fistiana or The Oracle of the Ring* gives his date as 1719. Strictly, however, his title to fame rests more securely on his excellence with the cudgel and small-sword than on fisticuffs, and the real father of the ring was John Broughton, who was Champion from 1738 to 1750.

Broughton had a famous place of entertainment known as the Amphitheatre, in Hanway Yard, Oxford Road, near the site of a like establishment that had been kept by Figg. Here, with pit and gallery and boxes arranged about a high stage, displays of boxing were given from time to time, and here it was that sportsmen first learned to enjoy desperate struggles between man and man.

As has already been shown, Broughton formulated the rules which for many years to come were to govern fighting, and which, much as they leave to the imagination as well as to the discretion of officials, tell us with the utmost simplicity the conditions under which men fought.

For eighteen years John Broughton was undisputed Champion of England. That probably meant very little, for boxing had not yet become popular and its science was in its extremest infancy. I would gladly make the foolish and unprofitable bet that if Broughton, in his prime and with his bare fists, could be transplanted to these latter days, he would not stand for one minute before Joe Beckett with the gloves on. (That is less of a handicap than it sounds to any boxer who has never used his bare knuckles.)

Broughton's fight with Slack can by no standard be called great, but it has its peculiar importance in showing us how a

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certain degree of skill hampered by over-confidence and lack of training may be at the mercy of courage, strength, and enterprise. Broughton's knowledge of boxing, compared with the science of Jem Belcher and Tom Spring, must have been negligible; but years of practice must have taught him something. As far as we can gather, Slack knew less than a small boy in his first term at school. He was a butcher by trade, and one day at Hounslow Races he had "words" with the champion, who laid about him with a horse-whip. Thereupon Slack challenged Broughton, and the fight took place at the Amphitheatre on April 10th, 1750.

There was nothing elegant about Jack Slack. His attitude was ugly and awkward, he was strong and healthy but quite untrained in our meaning of the word. He only stood 5 feet 8½ inches but weighed close upon 14 stone—nearly as much as his antagonist, who was a taller man. Broughton was eager for the fight or for the money to be derived from it. He regarded Slack with the utmost contempt and made no sort of preparation. So afraid was he that the butcher might not turn up at the last minute that he gave him ten guineas to make sure of him! The betting was 10-1 on Broughton when the men appeared in the ring. After all, as boxing went in these days, he did know something about defence, and he was master of two famous blows, one for the body and one under the ear, which were said to terrify his opponents.

Slack stood upright, facing his man, with his right rigidly guarding his stomach and his left in front of his mouth. But that was only at the beginning. Directly he got into action Slack speedily forgot his guard. The art of self-defence was unknown to him, his was the art of bashing. He was a rushing slogger against whom a cool man's remedy is obvious. But he was also a glutton for punishment, and almost boundless courage and staying power, or "bottom," as they used to call it in those days. Regardless of the plain danger of doing so, he charged across the ring at Broughton, raising his hands like flails. Slack was noted for downward chopping blows and for back-handers, neither of which are or ever have been really successful. Broughton met this

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wild charge in the orthodox manner with straight left and right, dropping off his man in such a way that the attacker's own weight was added to the power of the blows. For two minutes or so Slack was badly knocked about. Then they closed for a fall and Broughton's great strength gave him the advantage. But he was getting on in years and was untrained and in flesh. The effort of wrestling with a man of his own ponderous weight made his breath come short, and when next they faced each other across their extended fists the first dullness of fatigue already weighed on the old champion. He was a slow man, and had been used to win his fights by the slow and steady method of wearing down his antagonists. Slack was harder and stronger than he had supposed, but of course he would beat him—this ungainly slogger who didn't know enough to avoid the simplest blow. But Slack, the rusher, was a natural fighter which, when all's said, is a very good sort of fighter indeed. He liked the game—the fun of it, the sport of it. In spite of his bulk he was pretty hard. Standing square to his man with the right foot a little forward, he had no fear of his great reputation, he was quite untroubled by the stories of that terrible blow beneath the ear. He went for Broughton with a will. He would give him no time to remember his ring-craft. He would take cheerfully all that was coming on the way, and sooner or later he would get past the champion's guard.

And presently Slack jumped in and landed a tremendous blow between Broughton's eyes. And the champion's face was soft from good living. He had not been hit like that for many a year. Both his eyes swelled up at once.

The spectators saw that Broughton was dazed. He seemed stupid and slow—not himself at all. And—they could not understand this—he hesitated and flinched before his man. The Duke of Cumberland, who was his chief patron, could hardly believe his eyes. Broughton afraid? Broughton, from whom all others flinched away, who stood so boldly and straight before his man, who, though slow and heavy, was so sure and never gave ground? Slack stood away for a moment and Broughton came forward with his hands before him, feeling his way. Then the people saw

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that his eyes were entirely swollen up and closed. The man was blind.

The Duke was slower than the others.

"What are you about, Broughton?" he shouted to him. "You can't fight. You're beat."

To which Broughton replied, vaguely turning his head about as though uncertain from which quarter his backer's voice had come,—

"I can't see my man, your Highness. I am blind—not beat. Only put me in front of him and he'll not win yet."

But Slack dashed in again and Broughton could not ward off a blow. Still strong, quite unbeaten in the literal sense of the word, he had to give in. It was an accident in the game and yet it was a part of the game. The whole fight was over in fourteen minutes.

In order to compare those days with these, it is interesting to know that tickets for the Amphitheatre on this occasion cost a guinea and a half, whilst the money taken at the door besides fetched £150. Slack, as winner, was given the "produce of the house," which in all amounted to £600. When we have in mind the difference in the value of money then and now, we must realise that even in the early days of the Prize-Ring a successful boxer stood to win a considerable sum. The chief difference in his earning capacity lay in the fact that bare-knuckle fights were necessarily less frequent than the softer encounters of to-day. Nor was the sport widely popular at that time, the patrons and spectators being chiefly confined to publicans and other good sinners.

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CHAPTER II

TOM JOHNSON AND ISAAC PERRINS

It is character and knowledge of character, which, together with strength and skill, makes boxing champions to-day. And we are inclined to think that the psychological element in fighting came in only within the day of gloves, and rather late in that day. Certainly the old records of the early Prize-Ring are of brawn and stamina, skill and courage rather than of forethought and acutely reasoned generalship, but there are exceptions, and one of the most noteworthy is that of Tom Johnson.

Johnson (whose real name was Jackling) was a Derby man, who came to London as a lad, and worked as a corn porter at Old Swan Stairs. For a heavyweight champion he was very small—short, rather: for he stood but 5 feet 9 inches. He must, however, have been made like a barrel, for he weighed 14 stone, and the girth of his chest was enormous. A story is told of how Johnson when his mate fell sick carried two sacks of corn at each journey up the steep ascent from the riverside and paid the man his money, so that the boxer's amazing strength earned the double wage.

The best known and probably the fiercest of Johnson's battles was with Isaac Perrins, who stood 6 feet 2 inches and weighed 17 stone. It is not probable that boxers trained very vigorously in those early days, so that the weights may be misleading. Contemporary prints, however, certainly give the impression of men in hard condition. Perrins, a Birmingham man, is said to have lifted 8 cwt. of iron into a wagon without effort.

The fight took place at Banbury in Oxfordshire on October 22, 1789. The men fought (it is interesting to know when we

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think of the prizes of the present day) for 250 guineas. Two-thirds of the door money went to the winner, one-third to the loser. The men fought on a turfed stage raised five feet above the ground.

Johnson's method had always been to play a waiting game, to try to understand his opponent's temperament, to take no avoidable risks. He knew that he was a good stayer, so he was accustomed to use his feet and to keep out of distance until he had sized up his man. He would always make rather a long but certain job of a fight than a quick but hazardous one.

Johnson's greatest trouble was his passionate temper, which was largely the cause of his downfall two years later in his fight with Big Ben Brain. Isaac Perrins, who had the name of a good-natured giant, was the first to lead. He . . . "made a blow," Pierce Egan tells us, "which, in all probability, had he not have missed his aim, must have decided the contest, and Johnson been killed, from its dreadful force." But Johnson dodged the blow and countered with a terrific right-hander which knocked Perrins down. At that time prize-fighters stood square to each other with their hands level, ready to lead off with either. And in that position a man naturally fell over much easier than from the solid attitude of a few years later till the present time.

The next three rounds were Johnson's, for Perrins was shaken by his first fall. Then Perrins gathered himself together, and by sheer weight forced himself, regardless of the blows that rained on him, through the smaller man's guard and knocked him down. And for several rounds in his turn Perrins was the better. He cut Johnson's lip very badly, so that he lost blood, and the betting for some time remained in his favour.

Tom Johnson by this time had the measure of his man. The usual waiting game would not serve now. He must not only wait, but he must keep away, and in order to keep away, he must run away. This may not have been wholly admirable from a purely sporting point of view, but we must forgive Johnson a good deal (and as we shall see there really was a good deal to forgive) on account of his inches. "He had recourse," says Egan,

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"to shifting"—that is, he kept out of the way for as long as possible, and then, as by the rules of the Prize-Ring a round only ended when one of the men went down, probably closed and let Perrins throw him.

But the spectators approved of this method no better than they would to-day, and there was a good deal of murmuring against Johnson. At last Perrins, unable to reach his nimble-footed antagonist, began to mock at him. "Why!" he exclaimed to the company at large, "what have you brought me here? This is not the valiant Johnson, the Champion of England: you have imposed upon me with a mere boy!"

At this Johnson was stung to retort, for he was no coward and was but fighting in the only way which his size allowed. Moreover, Perrins's observation roused his dander, and he blurted out. "By God, you shall know that Tom Johnson *is* here!" and immediately flew at his man in a passion of rage and planted a terrific blow over his left eye, so that it closed almost at once.

This incident nearly decides for us that Perrins was not much of a boxer. A wild charge of that sort, particularly by a much smaller man, is seldom difficult to frustrate. And the opinion of the crowd began to veer round. Those who had put their money on Perrins began to hedge.

Undaunted by his closed eye, Perrins pulled himself together in the next round and returned as good as he had got, closing Johnson's right eye. And so for a while the fight remained level. Many rounds and very short ones. A half-minute's rest between. Much hard punishment given and got, but a great deal of it not of a kind obvious to the inexpert spectator. Quite apart from short-arm body-blows which are sometimes apt to elude observation, there was wrestling for a fall with which far more rounds ended than with falls from a blow. The effort to throw is exhausting enough, but to be thrown and for a heavy man to fall on top of you is terribly wearing. And though the strength of these two men was prodigious, yet Johnson was the closer knit of the two, from a boxer's point of view the better made.

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Now when they had fought forty rounds, Johnson was confident and happy, but he knew that he was pitted against a lion-hearted man who was by no means yet worn out. Suddenly he got an opening for a clean straight blow with all his weight behind it. This was a right-hander, which struck Perrins on the bridge of his nose and slit it down as though it had been cut with a knife.

The odds were now 100-10 on Johnson, but he had by no means won the fight. Perrins was boxing desperately, striving with his great superiority in reach to close Johnson's remaining eye. He knew very well that many a fight had been won like that, an otherwise unhurt man being forced to throw up the sponge because he was totally blinded by the swelling of his eyes. In the forty-first round Johnson either slipped down or deliberately fell without a blow and Perrins and his backers claimed the victory. If Johnson did actually play this very dirty trick to gain time and have a rest, he deserved to lose. We don't know what actually happened. The records merely state that he fell without being hit. But the umpires allowed it because that contingency had not been covered in the articles of agreement made before the fight.

Perrins now changed his method, attacking his man with chopping blows presumably on the back of the neck and head, and back-handed blows which are seldom efficacious. These puzzled Johnson at first, and he took some of them without a return until he learned the knack and guarded himself. And Perrins's strength now began to go: while Johnson, who for a few rounds had seemed tired, began to improve again. But yet he never began the attack. He left that always to the giant. In fact, Johnson did everything to save himself and to make his man do most of the work. Then Perrins, who had lunged forward with a terrific blow, fell forward, partly from his own impetus, and partly from weakness. Johnson, who had stepped aside from the blow, watched him and as he fell hit him in the face with all his might, at the same time tumbling over him. After that Perrins was done. Every round ended by his falling either from a blow or from sheer weakness. Johnson hit him as he pleased,

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with the consequence that Perrins's face was fearfully damaged, "with scarce the traces left of a human being." But he refused to give in, and round after round his seconds brought him to the scratch, when he swayed and staggered and struggled for breath and tried to fight on. His pluck in this battle was the inspiration of the Prize-Ring for ever afterwards. More than once Johnson, still strong, sent in tremendous blows which would utterly have finished lesser men, but Isaac Perrins held on until his friends and seconds gave in and refused to let the good fellow fight any more. The match had lasted for an hour and a quarter, during which sixty-two rounds had been fought.

In many ways it was an unsatisfactory fight, but for cunning (if rather low cunning) on one side and magnificent courage and determination on the other, it must be counted one of the greatest combats of the old days.

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CHAPTER III

RICHARD HUMPHRIES, DANIEL MENDOZA, AND JOHN JACKSON

THE Jews in this country have taken very kindly to boxing, both as spectators and as principals, throughout the annals of the Ring, both in the days of bare knuckles and in later times down to the present day, there has generally been a sprinkling of good fighting Israelites. And the first Jew of any note as a boxer became Champion of England.

The battles for which Daniel Mendoza was most famous were the succession, four in number, in which he engaged Richard Humphries. The first of these was negligible, being but a "turn-up" or pot-house quarrel at the Cock, Epping. This took place in September of 1787, but it led to a pitched fight between these men for a purse of 150 guineas at Odiham, in Hampshire, in the following January.

Like many prominent fighters, Mendoza was finely developed from the waist upwards, with a big chest and a show of muscle in the arms, but his legs were weaker. He was five-foot seven in height. Humphries was an inch taller and rather better built. He was known as the "Gentleman Boxer" because of his pleasant manners and sporting behaviour generally. Both were men of proved courage. As may be imagined from the Epping incident, there was no love lost between them.

They fought on a twenty-four foot stage erected in a field, but, since the day was wet, the boarded ring from the first proved to be a hindrance to good boxing.

At first the men were both very cautious. Mendoza, always a little inclined to attitudinise and to pose for effect, swaggered about the ring until he saw an opening when, lunging forward with a mighty blow he slipped and fell. On coming up again

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Mendoza got a little nearer to his man and hit him twice, the second blow knocking Humphries down. In the next round they closed and Humphries was heavily thrown. Already it seemed certain that Mendoza was the better boxer, though Humphries was very strong and full of pluck. And for a quarter of an hour of hard fighting his pluck was fully needed. Mendoza throughout that time attacked him with the utmost violence, knocking him down or throwing him with consummate skill, so that the betting was strongly in the Jew's favour. Then happened one of those curious and unsatisfactory incidents for which Broughton's Rules, at all events, had no remedy. Mendoza had driven his antagonist, blow following blow, right after left, across the ring to the side, which appears on this occasion to have been railed and not roped. A smashing right had all but lifted Humphries off the stage, and for a moment he hung over the rail quite helpless and at Mendoza's mercy. Instantly taking advantage of his position, the Jew sent in a terrific right-hander at Humphries's ribs which, had it landed, would almost certainly have knocked him out of time and so finished the fight. But Tom Johnson, who was acting as Humphries's second, leapt forward and caught Mendoza's fist in his own hand.

The Jew's followers immediately sent up a shout of "Foul!" which was reasonable enough. Indeed, by modern rules there would be no question at all. Humphries would have been immediately disqualified for his second's interference. But the old rules were elastic and the umpires on this occasion decided that Johnson was justified, as his man should be considered "down." Whether they had any ulterior motive, such as the desire to see the fight run its natural length, one cannot say. But we do know that human nature has altered remarkably little in a hundred and fifty years, and to-day a referee, not of the first rank, will often stretch a debatable point in order "not to spoil sport," or because it would be a pity if the public failed to get their money's worth out of the moving pictures taken of the fight.

Hitherto, owing to the wet and slippery boards, Humphries had been severely handicapped. He now took off his shoes and

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fought in his silk stockings. But with these, too, he found it difficult to keep his footing and after a round or two his seconds provided him with a pair of thick worsted stockings to put over them. In these he could stand firm, and shortly afterwards his great courage began to be rewarded, for Mendoza flagged a little, and Humphries picked him clean off his feet and threw him with terrible force to the ground. The Jew came down on his face, cutting his forehead severely and bruising his nose. Coming up for the next round, Mendoza was plainly hurt and shaken, and thenceforward his antagonist showed himself the better man. Mendoza went down before a terrific body-blow, while in the next round he fell from a left-hander on the neck which nearly knocked the senses out of him. Then, coming up again, he dashed at Humphries and hit him with all his flagging power in the face, but he slipped and toppled over from the impetus of his own rush and fell down on the boards with his leg awkwardly twisted under him. In doing this he sprained a tendon, and knowing that further effort was quite useless, he gave in. A moment later he fainted in the ring and was carried away. So Humphries's victory on this occasion was due, finally, to an accident. The whole battle was finished in half an hour, and "never was more skill and science displayed in any boxing match in this kingdom," wrote the chronicler, Pierce Egan, with his customary exaggeration.

Prone as human nature ever is, now as then, to judge by net results, Mendoza's reputation nevertheless suffered little from this defeat. On the contrary, he had boxed so well and had shown so much courage that he had, if anything, enhanced it. It was seen that he was a much quicker man than Humphries and that he was far better at close quarters. On the other hand, Mendoza was not a really hard hitter.

After this battle the winner wrote a note to his backer and patron, Mr. Bradyl, which delightfully summed up the situation:—

"Sir,—I have done the Jew, and am in good health.

"Richard Humphries."

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But a number of sportsmen were by no means satisfied that Humphries had "done" the Jew on his own merits. They fully realised that accident had materially helped in that "doing," and accordingly were ready to back the Jew again. The two men being quite willing, a match was arranged and was eventually fought in Mr. Thornton's park, near Stilton, in Huntingdonshire, on May 6th, 1789. For this encounter, popular excitement being very great, a sort of amphitheatre was built with seats piled tier on tier around the ring. It held nearly 3000 people. This, too, was an unsatisfactory fight, but has to be chronicled because it illustrates very vividly some of the causes which nearly a hundred years later finally brought the Prize-Ring to ignominy, and because, also, it shows how mixed are human motives and emotions during severe physical strain.

The men squared up to each other, and Humphries made the first attack, but Mendoza stopped the blow neatly and sent in a hard counter which knocked his antagonist down. The second and third rounds ended in exactly the same way. The Jew's confidence was complete, his speed remarkable. He had learned to hit no harder, but he certainly hit more often than Humphries. For about forty minutes Mendoza had much the best of it, taking his adversary's blows on his forearm, instantly replying with his quick, straight left, or closing and throwing Humphries.

The feeling of impotency, of long effort continuously baffled, finds the breaking point of a boxer's pluck much sooner than severe punishment relieved by a successful counter from time to time. Humphries was tired, but not seriously hurt. In the twenty-second round Mendoza struck at him, but he avoided the blow and dropped. He did not slip. As the Jew's fist came towards him he made the almost automatic movement which should ensure its harmlessness, but at the same moment he deliberately made up his mind to take the half minute's rest then and there. Or perhaps that was instinctive too. The human mind flits quickly through the processes or stages of intention and comes to a certain conclusion. Humphries wanted to gain time and fell without a blow. Now the articles of agreement

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expressly stated that if either man fell without a blow he should lose the fight. And the cries of "Foul!" from the crowd and especially from Mendoza's corner were natural enough. But Humphries and his backers claimed the fall a fair one because Mendoza had struck a blow, though it had not, as a matter of fact, landed. The partisans on either side wrangled and argued, and finally a general fight seemed almost inevitable. Above the yelling and cursing of the crowd and in the general confusion, the umpires could scarcely be heard. Sir Thomas Apreece, Mendoza's umpire, naturally shouted that it was a foul and that Humphries was beaten. Mr. Combe, the other umpire, held his tongue, refusing to give an opinion. That should have been sufficient. But Mendoza's second lost his temper and shouted across the ring to Tom Johnson, who was once again seconding Humphries, that he was a liar and a scoundrel. This observation may not have been strictly to the point, but the point (save that of the jaw) is the last consideration when feeling runs high on notable public occasions. Johnson said nothing and began to cross the ring in his slow, heavy way, looking very dangerous. But a diversion interrupted a promising bye-battle, for Humphries stood up and called on Mendoza to continue fighting, carrying the war, as it were, into the enemy's country by taunting him with cowardice. Mendoza was willing enough, but his backers held him back. Humphries then threw up his hat and challenged the Jew to a fresh battle, and at last they fell to again. And yet again Mendoza showed himself the better man, knocking Humphries down twice in succession. For half an hour the second act of this drama continued indecisive, though Mendoza was evidently the better and more skilful man. He now punished Humphries severely, closing one of his eyes, severely cutting his forehead and lip. He had little in return, though Humphries had put in some heavy body-blows at close quarters which had made the Jew wince. But throughout the second half of the fight Humphries fought with perfect courage and even confidence. Then at last he again fell without a blow, and Mendoza was declared the winner.

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BROUGHTON AND SLACK.

In the memorable battle at the Amphitheatre, on Tuesday April 10th 1750.

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Published June 25th 1819 by Ch. Armytage 130 S. Martins Lane

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What was to be thought of such a man?

Even now, neither Humphries nor his friends were fully satisfied. His tremendous hitting power, especially when directed against Mendoza's body, was reckoned as not having yet been fully tested. Once let him send home but one smashing right on the Jew's lower ribs, and he would certainly win.

Accordingly, yet another match was arranged in September of the following year at Doncaster, during (as Pierce Egan phonetically spells it) the Sellinger Cup week. The place chosen was confined on three sides by houses, whilst the fourth was closed by high railings behind which flowed the river Don. Public excitement was very high. Upwards of five hundred tickets of admission to the ground were sold at half a guinea each, whilst a ferryman made a small fortune by taking many hundreds of people over the river to the back of the railings at sixpence a head. These presently smashed down the railings and so gained an unauthorised entry. Having gained their point, however, the crowd behaved well, and settled down to watch the renewed trial of the two fighters in silent expectation.

Again a twenty-four-foot stage had been built at a height of four feet so that all the spectators could get a clear view. At half-past ten in the morning the men appeared, Mendoza immediately following Humphries. Both of them seemed cheerful, confident, and well. Johnson, who had hitherto been Humphries's second, had deserted and gone over to the opposite camp, his place being taken by John Jackson, who, a few years later, himself became Champion of England. Colonel Hamilton and Sir Thomas Apreece were the umpires, and they mutually agreed upon Mr. Harvey Aston as referee. Odds of 5 to 4 were laid on Mendoza.

Humphries led off with perfect confidence and all his strength, but was met by stout resistance. In a moment they were in each other's arms, struggling for a fall, and presently they both went over together. Their eagerness was quite undiminished when they came up again, Humphries doing most of the leading and landing from time to time, without, however, giving Mendoza

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serious trouble. After a time they grew more cautious, blows were fewer but harder, and Mendoza knocked his man down. In the fifth round Humphries made a desperate effort to get in one of his rib-bending body-blows, but failed, and in the rally that followed over-reached himself and fell. And then it was seen that, round by round, Mendoza was improving, scoring more heavily, boxing much better. The odds rose to 10-1 in his favour. Round after round ended by Humphries going down, sometimes from a blow, but more often "from a policy often used in boxing, which perhaps may be considered fair; several times he sank without a blow, which conduct, though contrary to the articles of agreement, was passed unnoticed."

Judging that conduct on its open merits, we should say that Humphries was a simple coward. But we often too easily and too quickly call people cowards, and even in this instance we have, so to speak, to look again.

The spectators, even in that age of quickly cut and dried opinions, still had a certain degree of confidence in this strange man, for whilst he was actually fighting, though round by round he got the worst of it, there was the same old vigour in his movements, the same readiness to seize an opportunity. The man of poor spirit in the ring is not so much one who cannot stand punishment as one who fails in aggression. Almost he hopes to be knocked out; he can stand up and defend himself, but on his very life he cannot force himself to take chances and attack his opponent.

Again he must have experienced the impotency of inaction. He tried to hit Mendoza, but seldom succeeded. Again, one eye was completely closed so that he could not see from it. His friends, seeing that he had no chance of winning now, begged him to give in. But he refused. And yet he kept falling without a blow. One moment he would make up his mind to be brave, to endure whatever punishment was coming to him, and the next he would fail, and seek respite on the ground. Then again he would stand up and try to fight. For a little while after his friends' solicitations, he was spurred on to his best endeavours, but it was

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useless. Mendoza won every round, and at last, dreadfully cut about the head and face, with a mutilated ear and a severe cut over the ribs, Humphries had to give in.

Much battered, he was carried through the crowd on the shoulders of his friends.

It was not until five years later that Mendoza's championship was wrested from him by John Jackson, a man whose title to fame arose rather from his general behaviour than from his performances as a professional athlete.

Jackson was born in 1768, and was the son of a builder. His forebears had come of a good yeoman race. He was a man of great solidity of character, astute commercial instincts and a sonorous pomposity of manner which passed very well for dignity. He was five-feet eleven in height, and he weighed fourteen stone. He was massively built, and he "took care of himself," as the saying goes: in other words, he lived a reasonable life—the last sort of life usually lived by the pugilists of that day.

Jackson and Mendoza met at Hornchurch, in Essex, on April 15th, 1795, for 200 guineas a side. The twenty-four-foot stage was built at the bottom of a hollow which formed a natural amphitheatre and accommodated about 3000 people.

Jackson had fought only twice before, having beaten Fewterel of Birmingham, a good man with twenty victories to his credit, and having lost, through falling and dislocating an ankle, to George Ingleston. His fine appearance and his portentous respectability no doubt brought more public interest to his fight with Mendoza than his record: but the Jew was a fully tried man of a great and deserved reputation, and the betting was 5-4 on him.

When the men had shaken hands a whole minute went by as they manœuvred about each other before a blow was struck. Then in the slow manner of that day, Jackson gathered himself together and sent in a tremendously hard left-hander which struck Mendoza full in the face and sent him down.

In the second round the Jew was more careful, and when Jackson went for him he stopped or avoided blow after blow,

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using his feet with neatness and dexterity, and returning, if not blow for blow, at least a fair proportion of them. A little later there was a fierce rally in which Mendoza was knocked down, but the betting nevertheless rose to 2-1 on him.

They fought at an ever increasing speed as time went on. In the fourth round, Jackson paid no heed at all to his opponent's blows, but battered his way in, taking much punishment to give the greater. Finally he sent home a terrible left on the right eye which completely slit open the brow and bled profusely besides causing Mendoza to fall. Jackson was evidently doing the better as the betting changed in his favour.

It was in the next, the fifth round, that our model of gentlemanly conduct sought his own advantage by means of one of the foulest tricks that have been handed down to us. There was a fierce exchange of blows during which the Jew's head was lowered as he lunged forward with his right to the body. Jackson stepped aside to avoid the blow and caught Mendoza by his somewhat long hair, twisting his fingers in it, whilst with his free hand he upper-cut him again and again.

Mendoza's friends instantly appealed to the umpires, but, Egan tells us, " they deemed it perfectly consistent with the rules of fighting." Mendoza fell and 2-1 was betted on Jackson.

During the next three rounds the old champion was evidently growing weak, and fought only on the defensive. But Jackson beat down his guard and hit him severely. The ninth round was the last. Jackson walked in and planted several hard blows in quick succession on face and body. Mendoza struggled on for a little while and at last fell utterly exhausted. He knew that he stood no chance now. It was folly to go on. He gave in.

It was one of the shortest main battles ever fought, lasting in all but ten minutes and a half; and for its time quite the hardest ever fought at all. Mendoza was badly cut up; the new champion was hardly hurt.

This was not by any means the Jew's last appearance in the Prize-Ring, for he fought Harry Lee for seventy minutes and beat him in fifty-three rounds eleven years later: and he actually

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fought Tom Owen in 1820, when he was fifty-seven years old. "Youth will be served," we know, and Owen, who was at the time only just over fifty, beat him. Mendoza lived to a good old age, and in comfortable circumstances, dying in 1836.

Seven years after the encounter recorded above a letter appeared in the *Daily Oracle and Advertiser* which purported to be a challenge from Mendoza to Jackson for a return match. As a fact, the letter was a practical joke; but a part of Jackson's reply is worth quoting, as it is so characteristic of all we hear of the man.

". . . for some years," he wrote, "I have entirely withdrawn from a public life, and am more and more convinced of the propriety of my conduct by the happiness which I enjoy in private among many friends of great respectability, with whom it is my pride to be received on terms of familiarity and friendship. . . ."

Jackson never fought again, and one of the greatest reputations in the annals of the championship that have come to us is based upon a pugilist who only entered the ring thrice! One other champion was in precisely the same case, and that was John Gulley, whom we shall come to in due course.

No doubt Jackson attracted to himself a good deal of attention apart from the eccentricity of his good behaviour. He was a man of prodigious strength and is said to have written his name whilst an 84 lb. weight was suspended from his little finger.

After his retirement he took rooms at 13 Old Bond Street, a regular and fashionable house of call for the young bloods of the day. It became the correct thing to take a course of boxing lessons from John Jackson. Byron, who was a keen boxer despite his infirmity, used to go there to keep down the fat of which he ever lived in terror. In his diary for March 17th, 1814, he says: "I have been sparring with Jackson for exercise this morning, and mean to continue and renew my acquaintance with my mufflers. My chest, and arms, and wind are in very good plight, and I am not in flesh. I used to be a hard hitter and my arms are

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very long for my height."—which was 5 ft 8¼ inches—" At any rate, exercise is good, and this the severest of all ; fencing and broadsword never fatigued me half so much."

Byron regarded John Jackson as a friend whom he greatly admired. He wrote letters to him on several occasions.

Jackson had innumerable pupils and was about the first real instructor of boxing for amateurs. He went to his grave in Brompton Cemetery old and honoured in 1845.

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CHAPTER IV

JEM BELCHER

If the love of Fair Play is not born in us, and has therefore to be taught, we do have ingrained in us a very real admiration for a good loser. Nothing, as we know only too well, succeeds like success—particularly material success. But somewhere or other deep down in us we have a kind of mistrust of what the world at large calls success: there may be a tinge of superstition in our feeling. At any rate we have a very warm corner in our hearts for the glorious failure: and not without good reason, for there are more failures than successes, and, having failed, it is easy enough to invent the glory.

Jem Belcher is probably the most renowned prize-fighter that ever lived. He won several splendid victories, details of some of which have come down to us. But it is not his victories that have given fame to him so much as his glorious defeats: and these not so much on account of the champions who beat him, though they were very famous too, as on account of Belcher's personality. This, compounded as it was of qualities and especially defects, unlovely in themselves, was of exactly the kind which endears itself to the English speaking world, and to that world not only.

Jem Belcher was a roysterer, a drinker, a loose fish. He was also jealous and vindictive. But he was indomitably courageous and he was good-looking. He was a gracefully built man, and well-proportioned, but he made no great show of muscle. He stood 5 ft. 11 in., but never weighed more than 11 stone 10 lb.—only a little over the modern middle-weight limit.

Jem Belcher was born at Bristol on April 15th, 1781, being on his mother's side a grandson of Jack Slack, the champion of

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1750. He went to work as a butcher's boy, and whilst quite a lad, showed amazing precocity as a boxer. His first recorded fight, when he was but seventeen, was with Britton, whom he beat in March of 1798 in half an hour or so. Then he came to London, where he was kindly treated by Bill Warr, now an elderly man, who put on the gloves with him to see what he was made of. As a result of this trial, Warr backed Jem against Paddington Jones, whom he easily beat. In the following year he fought a drawn battle with Jack Bartholomew, when quite out of condition. In 1800 he was matched with Bartholomew again and fought him for three hundred guineas a side on Finchley Common. Belcher had already shown himself as a brilliantly scientific boxer, aggressive, "never to be denied," as they say. But with Bartholomew, a much heavier and stronger man, he showed how well he could defend himself, "milling on the retreat" when necessary. In spite of this Bartholomew dashed at him at the beginning, and, forcing down his guard, knocked Jem down. So certain were Bartholomew's backers that he had the fight in one hand, so to say, that they immediately sent off messengers to London announcing his victory. This was a little premature, for no sooner had those messengers left the ring-side than Belcher with lightning speed hit his opponent several times in succession without a return, and finished a brilliant round by throwing him a hard cross-buttock. The effects of this handicapped Bartholomew for the rest of the encounter. He had plenty of pluck, and all of it was needed. The moral courage required to stand up and take a beating from a much lighter man, or rather a boy, is very great. The rounds were short and very fierce, seventeen being fought in twenty minutes. And at the end of that time Jem sent home a tremendous body-blow which knocked Bartholomew down and out of time. He was unable to reach the scratch after the half-minute's rest.

After this Belcher thrashed Andrew Gamble in five rounds and nine minutes. His next battle, quite an important one in regarding the man's record, was yet but a brawl at the ring-side of another fight. Just after the encounter between Isaac Bittoon

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and Tom Jones in July of 1801, Joe Berks, the Shropshire butcher (who figures in somewhat similar circumstances with Boy Jim in Sir A. Conan Doyle's *Rodney Stone*), somewhat elated by wine, called out, "Where's young Jem Belcher? Where's your champion?" So Jem went up to him and asked him what he wanted. The reply was a quick blow which Belcher, ever on the alert, stopped. They thereupon settled down to a bye-battle which lasted for nineteen minutes and which Jem Belcher decisively won.

However, it was manifest that Berks had been fighting under the handicap of considerable intoxication, and a set battle was finally arranged between these two in the following November. They met at Hurley Bottom, near Maidenhead.

Joe Berks was much the stronger man, and though early in the fight Jem laid open his nose with a vicious right and later cut his forehead so that Joe lost a lot of blood, his seconds finding it impossible to staunch it, he fought like a tiger. In the ninth round after these misfortunes and when he had been getting much the worst of it, he dashed in, through, as it were, Jem's raining blows, seized hold of him and hurled him down with terrific force. Joe Berks was a gallant ruffian, and though utterly defeated in sixteen rounds and twenty-five minutes refused to give in. Finally his seconds threw up the sponge on his behalf. He was much cut and bruised both in face and body, while young Jem Belcher hardly had a mark to show, and seemed quite unhurt. He declared afterwards that he never felt a blow throughout the fight—which is probably untrue.

After he had beaten Joe Berks again and Fearby, the Young Ruffian, in fourteen and eleven rounds respectively, Jem Belcher was generally regarded as the Champion.

It was after these fights that a great misfortune befell him. Jem, who, like other fighters of his day, was made much of by sportsmen of all kinds, was playing racquets one afternoon with a Mr. Stewart at the court in St. Martin's Street, when a ball struck him in the eye and literally smashed it. This was in July of 1803. The misfortune, great as it would have been to any

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man, was not at the moment calamitous, for Belcher had made enough money to enable him to settle down as a publican; and he now took the "Jolly Butchers" in Wardour Street, Soho. It was supposed that he would never dream of fighting again, blind as he was in one eye; and no one challenged his championship. For two years he maintained the dignity of champion, until the exploits of Henry—commonly called Hen—Pearce, the "Game Chicken," roused him from his retirement.

Though in years Pearce was just a little older than Jem, he had been his protégé, and Belcher had brought him up from his native Bristol a few years before. Pearce stood 5 ft. 9 in. and weighed 13 stone, having a figure like Tom Johnson's. He was slow, and his knowledge of and skill in boxing was by no means equal to his master's, but he was very strong. In 1804 he had beaten Joe Berks, and in the following year John Gulley, after a tremendous battle which lasted for fifty-nine rounds and one hour and ten minutes. After this he was generally acclaimed as Champion of England. And at that Jem Belcher's bitter envy rose like flame. He couldn't bear to see even his friend whom he had taught and introduced to the London Ring on his own old throne. To the great surprise of everybody he challenged Pearce, and the fight took place on December 6th, 1805, at Blyth, near Doncaster. The "Napoleon of the Ring," as Jem was sometimes called, owing to his slight physical resemblance to our great enemy of that period, was the favourite, despite his blind eye. But directly he stripped the betting changed to 5-4 on Pearce. The landlord of the "Jolly Butchers" had not improved his physique during the two years of retirement.

Though still a young man Belcher had all the sensations of a returning veteran. Indeed it takes a young man to feel that kind of position strongly. Despite the jealousy which had prompted the challenge, there was a romantic atmosphere about all the circumstances of this battle. The half-blind hero, thin, weedy, delicate, fighting the new and sturdier champion; skill and a wonderful spirit pitted against solid bone and muscle. By the

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time the fight had begun, Jem Belcher felt the romance of it more keenly than his unjust resentment.

We may regard Jem as the first perfect exponent of that splendid blow, the straight and simple left lead. And after the usual caution when the men first met it was with a lightning left, but fiercely hard, that he drew first blood, cutting Pearce's eye severely. It was like old times—it was always the same way: Joe Berks was strong and so was Fearby, but they could not stop him, Jem Belcher. That left had gone in easily enough. He knew *how* to hit, did Jem. Strength wasn't everything. But—what was this? There were uncomfortable abilities in strength after all. The Game Chicken took his blow and heeded not his bleeding eye-blow and then he closed, and his grip tightened and tightened, until Jem was like a helpless child in his huge brawny arms, and presently he was flung violently upon the turf. Something in sheer strength, when all's said.

But there's a good deal in boxing too. Belcher feinted with his left and sent home a hard body-blow with his right, repeating it in the next moment. Pearce's streaming eye hampered him a good deal, but even yet he could see sometimes when he wiped the blood away, while Jem, from his corresponding eye, could see nothing. Swinging his weight forward, he aimed a tremendous blow with the right at Jem, who, with all his old coolness and dexterity, guarded it, and joined gladly in the fierce rally that ensued. Then in a lull out came Pearce's long arms again to seize Jem in a bear-like hug and throw him down.

And so they fought on. Other things being equal, the boxer wins. And so far as boxing goes Jem had this battle all his own way, but he could not withstand that grim hug, which caught him round after round about his middle and hurled him, shaken and weakening, to the ground.

And yet in the fifth round, greatly daring, Jem carried the war to his opponent and threw him; though the effort of doing so was beyond all wisdom. In the next round Belcher was boxing again with cold skill and neat precision, but his old vigour was lacking. He looked a sick man, though his remaining eye was

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bright and open. They wrestled for a fall, but the heavy Pearce was uppermost. In the seventh round both went down together after Jem had suffered some severe punishment with his head "in chancery" under the Chicken's arm, but in the eighth he showed himself the old champion. Shaken and weakened as he had been, he gathered himself together and hit out as he had been used to do. If only he could keep this up! He knew that he had only too little reserve of strength, but surely Pearce could not endure this hammering for long. Using his right chiefly now, he hit his opponent as he liked and when he liked, and when Pearce showed signs of exhaustion, Jem wound up the round by throwing him clean out of the ring.

But when they came up again Jem was bitterly disappointed. Pearce was very strong. *His* shaking had done him little harm. Belcher hit him hard in the face, but he could take it all and more. They fell together, but Jem knew that unless he could beat him soon, he was done.

In the twelfth round it was plain to every one that Jem's strength was going, and he knew it himself. He made a desperate effort, but it was of no use against this rock of a man. Pearce closed and threw him half over the ropes, so that he was at his mercy, but he stood away. "I'll take no advantage o' thee, Jem," he said, "I'll not hit thee, lest I hurt thine other eye."

Men of Belcher's temperament and in his position can brook no pity, and Pearce's gallant sentiments only enraged him. His hits were growing weak, he was panting for his breath, his knees were shaking, but even so he contrived to end the thirteenth round by throwing the Chicken down.

In the next round he tried to gain time. He was bleeding severely from several deep cuts about his face, and it was increasingly hard to will himself to go on doing his hopeless best. He fought as much as possible on the retreat, trying to keep away. But the Chicken saw a chance of finishing the fight quickly and dashed in, hitting Jem with great force under his blind eye. Then he threw him.

A little later Pearce again got Jem over the ropes in a helpless

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position and again stepped back, refusing to take advantage of him. In falling sideways it was thought that Jem had broken a rib in hard contact with a ring post. He winced as he came up for the seventeenth round. He was not merely so weak that he could hardly stand, but he was suffering great pain. His pluck was exemplary; he stood up and did his best to box, guarding a blow from time to time and trying to put in a return. But now Pearce had the battle in his hands. He hit Jem as he pleased, as Jem had only a short while ago hit him and ended the round by throwing him.

In the next round Jem came up staggering to the scratch, but once there he found that he could not even lift his left arm at all, and with a bitterness in his heart such as he had dreamed that he would never know, he gave in.

And Pearce, to show how strong he was, could not resist showing off by jumping out of the ring and back again and turning a somersault.

The fight had lasted but thirty-five minutes in all.

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CHAPTER V

JEM BELCHER AND TOM CRIBB

After Jem Belcher's signal defeat at the huge hands of Pearce, the "Game Chicken," two years passed by before the temptation once again to risk the chances of the ring overpowered the old champion. During that time his life as a publican had by no means improved his already enfeebled physique. And those two years had seen the rise to fame (and that fame steadily growing) of one Tom Cribb, a Gloucestershire man like Pearce and Belcher himself, a heavy, slow, ponderous fellow, who had beaten good men, the best of whom was Bill Richmond, the black, and who had been beaten but once, when quite out of condition, by George Nichols.

Once again Belcher's jealousy blazed up, and he challenged Cribb. The challenge was accepted. At that stage of Cribb's career it could in no wise be avoided, but his backers were not at all easy. They knew what Jem Belcher could do, they knew that their own man was dead slow. They were afraid that, despite the old champion's unathletic life, Tom Cribb would never be able to touch him.

The fight took place on April 8th, 1807, for £200 a side. The place chosen was Moulsey Hurst, on the Thames, almost opposite to Hampton Court, the scene of innumerable prize-fights. The battle attracted all the foremost sportsmen of the day, and the gutteral exclamations of the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV., were heard amongst the chatter at the ring-side. John Jackson kept "time."

In spite of his pasty face and weedy appearance Jem was still the favourite. His arms, never remarkable for muscular development, looked thin and meagre, his whole body poor.

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But the lion-hearted courage of the man had so firm a hold upon the imagination of his friends that they believed him still invincible. It was easy enough to invent excuses for his defeat by Pearce.

Cribb was a shorter man, but fully two stone heavier. He was built on the heroic scale, with huge chest and shoulders and the arms of an inelegant Hercules. To the more dismal of his friends, who warned him of Jem's speed, he replied, grinning. "You'll see, he'll break his hands on my head." Cribb's was a very tough nut, and with considerable experience behind him he knew it.

The fight began with the usual caution. Then Jem darted in with a couple of spanking blows at his adversary's face, and almost before Cribb knew where he was, he had jumped away again out of reach. Again Jem did this and yet again. All the stories he had heard of Cribb's great strength were comfortably balanced by the discovered truth of the stories about his slowness. But the next time Jem leapt in upon his man Cribb was ready with a heavy right-hand counter on the ribs ; and then before he could get away Jem found himself whirled off his feet and flung hard upon the ground.

In the next round Jem backed away, tempting Cribb to try for another fall, and as the big fellow lumbered after him, Jem stopped abruptly and sent in lightning blows with left and right, a bang under the chin and again and again on the face and nose, so that the blood ran fast. Then like the vainglorious fool that he was, he closed with Cribb, and exerting all his strength, flung him on the ground.

It was an idiotic thing to do, for to throw a man two stone heavier than yourself is more exhausting than to be thrown by him. And Jem Belcher knew it, but seeing the opportunity could not resist it, well knowing as he must have done, that Cribb could endure any amount of such treatment. Thereafter for a little while, it is true, Jem was all over Cribb. He was infinitely the better and the faster boxer. Lord Saye and Sele, Jem's principal backer, watched him with satisfaction. "He'll have Tom blinded in half an hour," he said: for again and again Jem's sharp knuckles had landed on his opponent's shaggy eyebrows. But the amateur

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had not thoroughly studied the anatomy of Cribb. He had not noticed, for example, that his eyes were unusually deep set, so that though his brows were badly bruised and constant sharp blows had fallen on the cheekbones as well, the subsequent swelling had not closed Tom's eyes as it would have other men's. Moreover, when blow on blow upon the hard bone of his brows had lacerated the swollen flesh, the flow of blood partly relieved the swelling. But for some rounds Jem Belcher hammered him unmercifully. Left and right, quickly following up advantages, he drove Cribb before him round and across the ring. Thrice in succession he exerted his strength and, closing, threw his antagonist heavily upon the grass.

But Tom Cribb was hard and healthy and strong. He might be a poor boxer at this time, but he knew how to play a waiting game, and he had the moral courage to bide his time and the physical courage to endure the inevitable punishment, and now at last he saw that Jem's rushes were slower. The grim-faced, battered fighter looked across the ring at the slim and delicate fellow, so light a burden upon his second's knee, whose face showed not a mark, and he nodded to his own attendants. "You watch," he said.

When they came up again, the spectators noticed that there were bruises about Jem's ribs, and that when Tom's infrequent body blows did land, he winced with obvious pain. But he continued to take care of his head. For a round or two Jem had been slowing down, then once again he pulled himself together and went for Cribb with the fury of despair. He understood now what it was to fight a man so vastly his better in sheer strength. And under the rain of his punches Tom Cribb retreated and at length fell prostrate in his own corner. Many folk at the ringside thought that the fight was over. Half a minute to go—could Cribb recover? His seconds sluiced him with cold water, rubbed his limbs, dragged him up. There he was, staggering at the scratch, a pitiful sight, broken, bleeding, but upright, and, as the moments passed, steadier, with left foot out, hands up and head erect. And again Jem went for him and landed a couple of

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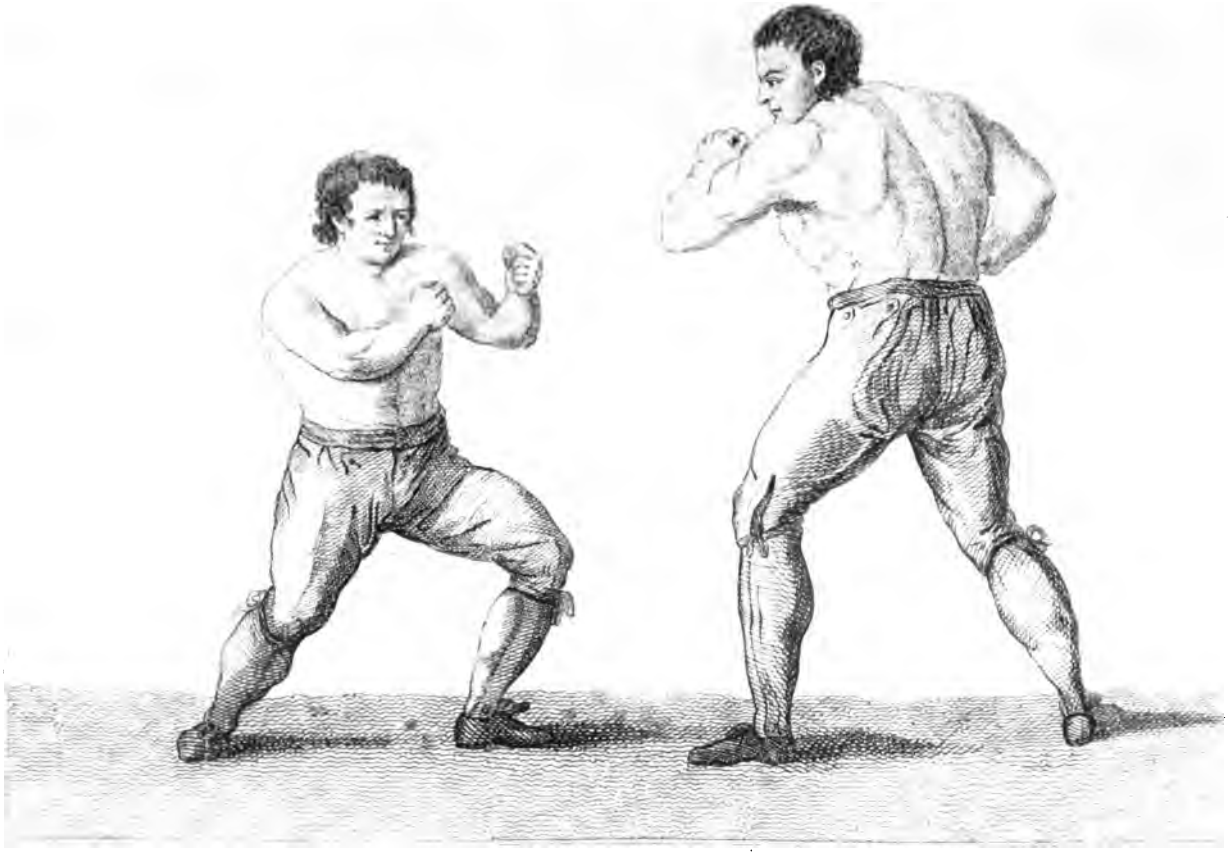

JOHNSON & PERRINS.

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blows, right and left, upon his head. Then he backed away towards his own corner, glancing at his fists as he did so. Tom Cribb grinned, and turned for an instant towards his own corner, nodding, as much as to say, "Told you so." Jem came forward again and made a hesitating attempt at a blow. Tom guarded it easily and went after him, pressing him towards the ropes and finally sending him down with a heavy right on the ribs. In the next round Jem came up again, clearly afraid to hit, and this time with a terrific-body blow Cribb sent him clear through the ropes.

The turn of fortune had been amazingly sudden. Not three minutes before every one save Cribb and a few of his supporters had thought the end had come and in Jem's favour. Now Tom knocked him down again without anything like resistance. And at the end of forty-one rounds and thirty-five minutes, Jem Belcher had perforce to give in. Immediately afterwards he walked, weak but not dead-beat, round the ring, showing his hands to the spectators. They were quite useless. Tom had been right: his hard head had driven up the knuckles so that the lightest hit was to Jem exquisitely painful.

It was an honourable defeat, though a bitter disappointment to Jem Belcher. Well he knew that in all but strength and hardness he was the better man. And he knew, too, that few, save Cribb, could endure the amount of punishment that he had given before his hands went, and that in the days before he lost his eye and before he had weakened his constitution by drinking, Cribb could never have stood a chance with him.

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CHAPTER VI

JOHN GULLEY

BEFORE continuing the history of Tom Cribb and finally disposing of the unlucky Belcher, it is necessary to turn aside and examine the brief pugilistic career of John Gulley, who, like Jackson, fought but thrice and like him depended for fame more upon his respectability than upon the drive of his fist. To get the worst over at once I may record the notorious fact that Gulley, after leaving the Ring, made money and flattered his self-esteem by entering Parliament, sitting for Pontefract. Nowadays champion boxers are a cut above that sort of thing.

Despite the shortness of his fighting life and his monumental respectability, John Gulley was a very fine pugilist. How he gained the necessary reputation before being matched with the Game Chicken it is impossible to say. We know that he found willing backers, so we may safely assume that he had shown more than usual skill with the "mufflers," as boxing gloves were called in those days. The fight, which took place on July 20th, 1805, at Hailsham, in Sussex, lasted for an hour and ten minutes, and was finished in fifty-nine rounds. Gulley was beaten, nearly every round ending by his downfall, but he boxed well and showed remarkable endurance and pluck.

On the retirement of Pearce, chiefly owing to ill-health—indeed, the poor fellow died not long afterwards of consumption—Gulley became virtual champion. But he can hardly be described by that title with full justice, for the reason that he declined the office and showed no desire to act as a champion in the true meaning of the word, for he did not stand to accept challenges. He honourably retired from the ring, kept the Plough Inn, Carey Street, and realised a large fortune as a

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bookmaker. But his two victories over Bob Gregson are certainly worth mention. One of them is the subject of an illustration in this book.

Though these battles were between two big men, the hugeness of Gregson made them appear unevenly matched. Gulley weighed about 13½ stone, and stood just under 6 feet. Gregson, a Lancashire man by birth, weighed 15 stone and was 6 ft. 2 inches. They fought at Six Mile Bottom, near Newmarket, on October 14th, 1807. Gulley had Tom Cribb in his corner and Gregson Bill Richmond.

For the first six rounds there was little to choose between them. But Gregson was somewhat daunted by a very severe knock down in the second round. Gulley hit him full in the face with such force that the blood literally flew from him. In the seventh, however, the bigger man fought through his opponent's guard and gave Gulley such a blow under the eye as knocked the senses out of him for a few seconds, and his eye swelled up so that he was completely blinded in it. In the next round Gregson, using his tremendous strength, lifted his man up and hurled him to the ground as though he had been a piece of timber. But he refrained from falling on him, which, by the rules then in force, he was entitled to do, and whereby with his great weight he might have done severe damage—and so earned the cheers of the onlookers. The ninth round immediately following, found Gulley still quite cool and using all his skill. He knocked his man down, though not severely. Then onward till the sixteenth round, however, Gregson's strength made itself felt, and he gave John Gulley a very bad time. Gulley seemed to be weakening, and round after round ended in his downfall. Then he "got his second wind," and in a fierce rally knocked Gregson clean off his feet.

It must be remembered that for some time past Gulley could see with but one eye, and though he was the better boxer, his opponent's extra weight was a severe added handicap when it came to a fall. Gulley would have much the better of the exchanges round after round, and yet many of these rounds ended by his being desperately thrown.

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By the twenty-third round, however, it was seen that Gregson's strength was ebbing, whilst Gulley somehow gave the impression of maintaining the same condition as he had shown after the first ten rounds. That is to say, he appeared to be weak, but again and again gathered himself up for some prodigious effort by sheer will-power. Up to the twenty-fifth round it was, as the saying goes, anybody's fight. Both men were badly damaged: the strength of both was fast ebbing. You might say that if either had known exactly how bad the other felt he could have won then and there. In all personal combats it is each man's business to hide his feelings from his opponent. He must be hurt without showing that he is hurt, and however much hurt he must persist in wanting to win. There comes a time in a hard fight, with gloves or without them, when one man or other wants less to win than to be done with the whole agonising, wearying business on any terms. And that man is beaten. So it was now with Gregson. Hurt and fatigued, he lost heart at last. His will had been stubborn, but not so stubborn as John Gulley's. They fought on till the thirty-sixth round, till both were almost at a standstill. Then Gulley made the last supreme effort and knocked Bob Gregson down, so that he could not rise to the call of time. Gulley himself came staggering to the scratch.

This was regarded at the time as one of the severest battles ever seen in the Prize-Ring. It was a good sporting encounter throughout, with good will and even magnanimity on either side. Gulley had greatly improved in the science of boxing since his encounter with the Chicken, and he needed all that science in order to balance Gregson's extra height, weight, and reach.

For his part Gregson and his backers believed that he could yet beat Gulley, and he accordingly challenged him to fight for £200 a side. The day fixed was May 10th, 1808, and the scene of action on the borders of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The magistrates, however, made difficulties, as they occasionally did even in those days, and the Dunstable volunteers were called out to " keep the peace " and to deal with " the proposed riotous assembly." Eventually the principals, seconds, backers, and

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huge "riotously assembled" crowd moved off to Sir John Seabright's Park in the friendlier county of Hertford. And there the fight took place in a huge ring, forty feet square.

Men on horseback and on foot, in barouches, coaches, carriages, donkey-carts, men walking, men running, went across country for several miles out of the jurisdiction of the enemies of pugilism. Much rain had fallen during the day, with the consequence that the fighters had some difficulty in keeping their feet. Gregson, in anticipation of this, had spiked shoes, but Captain Barclay, as referee, justly regarded these as dangerous and unfair, and ruled that the men should fight without shoes, which accordingly they did.

The men circled about each other in the dog-like fashion in which the majority of fights opened, and Gulley retreated towards his own corner. His seconds, Bill Gibbons and Joe Ward, fearing lest Gregson with his great weight should fall upon their man whilst his back was against one of the stakes, put their hands over the top of it to prevent serious injury. But Gulley knew what he was about; feinting with his left he brought his right over with a great swing of his shoulders and caught his man fairly upon the temple and knocked him down. So excited were the onlookers at the second great trial between these men that they were quite silent, and not one cheer was raised. Only the light shuffling of stockinged feet was heard, hard breathing, and the spank of Gulley's prodigious blow. The second round ended in the same way, though Gregson had first put in a resounding thump upon his opponent's chest, which was, however, unlikely to have damaged him much. They were still very cautious, and for five minutes sparred for an opening, neither taking any grave risk. Then, with all his might, Gregson let fly with his left. Gulley took the blow on his arm, but felt the effects of it for long afterwards. It is probable that such a blow set up an inflammation of the muscles which, aided perhaps by rheumatism, would render it useless for several months.

The next three rounds ended by Gulley going down: in the sixth Gregson fell upon him so that he gasped long for breath.

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He had previously committed a foul by seizing Gulley's thighs. The seventh round was Gulley's, for with blow on blow he drove his opponent through the ropes. He knocked Gregson down again and it was evident that he not only knew more boxing, but by agility and strength made up for the disparity in their weights. The tenth round found Gregson's head pulped with savage blows and his left eye nearly closed. Egan tells us that Gregson was now "fighting rather after the Lancashire method, without any pretensions to science."

Gregson showed plenty of ordinary pluck, for though he was knocked down again and again and severely punished, he stood up like a man. But the extraordinary pluck or will-power exerted in adverse circumstances deserted him sooner in this encounter than it had in the previous one. He had been very badly hammered then; and the moral effect of that thrashing told upon him now.

In the twelfth round Gulley landed a smashing hit from which Gregson was in the act of falling when his antagonist hit him again. There were cries of "Foul," but the blow was a fair one. Such an incident happens not infrequently. It happened in January, 1922, at the end of the fight between Carpentier and Cook.

After this Gregson was all but blinded, and staggered about the ring half dazed, he could not reach Gulley, who hit him thrice in quick succession as it pleased him, and knocked him down.

In the seventeenth round Gregson lost his temper and his head. That is fatal. It is, of course, all nonsense to suppose that an angry man cannot put up a good fight. He can; a touch of cold rage lends power to a man: thinking clearly he hits to hurt. But wild, tempestuous rage is another matter altogether. The man becomes blind, inasmuch as what he sees conveys no message to his brain. For a moment or two it is, perhaps, impossible to hurt him, for his passion consumes his other senses. But sooner or later some stunning blow will cool its victim's fiery temper: there will be a brief moment of realisation, and—it will

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be too late. The wild, unthinking attack will have been checked, but the power to guard against reprisal will be numbed.

Gregson charged at his antagonist like a great bull, head down, arms working like flails. Gulley stood still, coolly taking his opportunity. Left and right he sent his bony fists crashing into Gregson's face, brought, by his attitude, into easy reach. Left and right, and then, giving way a little, left and right again. He hit him as he liked, driving his weight behind each blow, guarding himself from or merely avoiding the ponderous windmill attack of the infuriated giant. When Gregson's moment of realisation came, his temper having passed, he fled towards the side of the ring, actually turning his back upon Gulley as he did so. But Gulley was after him and never left him alone, bringing short-arm blows to bear upon face and body until, utterly exhausted, Gregson fell.

From the eighteenth to the twenty-fourth and last round Gulley had the fight, as it were, in one hand. He punished Gregson terribly, but the giant's pluck was even greater than his rage had been. He would not give in, but came, at each call of time, staggering to the scratch. At last Gulley got the chance of an absolutely clear, free blow, into which he could put every ounce of his weight. It caught Gregson behind the ear and knocked him out; that is to say, he had not recovered at the end of half a minute, and was unable to stand at the next call of time.

Bob Gregson was certainly a great pugilist, and besides, like Gulley and Jackson, a man of presence and social charm. Indeed, he was offered and accepted a commission in the army, but Pierce Egan tells us that his means would not support the privilege for more than a very short while. It is Egan, too, who tells us that Bob Gregson, "although not possessing the terseness and originality of Dryden, or the musical cadence and correctness of Pope, yet still. . . . entered into a peculiar subject with a characteristic energy and apposite spirit." In other words, Gregson wrote verse. That there may be no misunderstanding,

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the following stanza, the first of three in honour of Tom Cribb, is quoted below:—

" You gentlemen of fortune attend unto my ditty,
A few lines I have penn'd upon this great fight,
In the centre of England the noble place is pitch'd on,
For the valour of this country, or America's delight;
The sturdy Black doth swear,
The moment he gets there,
The planks the stage is built on, he'll make them blaze and smoke;
Then Cribb, with smiling face,
Says, these boards I'll ne'er disgrace,
They're relations of mine, they're old English Oak."

This refers to one of the battles, shortly to be described, between Tom Cribb and Molineux, the black.

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CHAPTER VII

JEM BELCHER'S LAST FIGHT

As already said, John Gulley retired from the ring after his second fight with Bob Gregson, and Tom Cribb, having himself beaten Gregson a few months later—that is, on October 25th, 1808, was declared Champion of England. And once again Jem Belcher's unreasoning ambition (or insensate jealousy—whichever way you like to put it) caused him to challenge Tom for the title. This time, though Jem found backing, as an old favourite somehow always will, his friends frankly dreaded the issue. In the two years or so that had gone by since their last encounter, Jem had taken no greater care of himself than previously. His all too easy, self-indulgent life in conjunction with a naturally delicate body, had made a poor creature of him. Before his second fight with Cribb he entered the ring, as you might say, a beaten man.

The place chosen on this occasion was the racecourse at Epsom, the day was the first of February, 1809. The betting was 7-4 and 2-1 on Cribb, who had been trained by Captain Barclay, himself a good amateur boxer, though chiefly known in those days as the man who, for a wager, had walked a thousand miles in as many hours.

And yet the first round was Jem's. Tom Cribb, though in much better condition than formerly, had not yet reached his highest form and was still ponderous and slow, relying upon his strength, playing a waiting game. Jem dashed in with all his old eagerness and gusto, and spanked away at the champion merrily. Tom retreated, and Jem's wonderful speed confused and hustled him, so that he could not guard himself effectually, and Jem would send home sharp, stinging lefts followed by heavier rights, half a

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dozen to Cribb's one. But though he might be momentarily bothered and confused, the champion was quite content. He could stand all the punishment that Jem could give him—that he knew already. He had only to wait. It was worth a few knocks. Jem would beat himself.

The second round was rather different. Jem still did all the leading and Tom fought on the retreat, but this time he kept his head and stopped most of the quick blows that Jem aimed at him. His guard had greatly improved, he used both his head and his feet with coolness and sound judgment. It is true that he was somewhat staggered by one very hard hit that Jem drove home over his guard, but that led the weaker man to an act of foolishness such as had helped towards his downfall in their previous fight. Jem dashed in and instead of raining blows to complete his man's discomfiture, he closed and wrestled with him and finally threw him, which, as we have seen, did more to exhaust the temporary victor than his opponent. Not even the betting by unintelligent spectators was affected. Indeed Captain Barclay promptly tried to lay 4-1 on Cribb, but found no takers even at that price.

And yet for many rounds Belcher boxed with great skill, though quite early in the fight it was noticed that his wind was poor, and in any sharp rally he had to fight for his breath. Time after time Cribb found himself able to get close and throw him. But it was Cribb once more who showed the severer signs of punishment: his face was already swollen and he bled profusely from several cuts made by Jem's sharp knuckles. Again and again Cribb was out-boxed, but what was science against a man whose mighty strength could ignore blows? Belcher was indeed and once again beating himself. His wind was gone, his breath came in feverish gasps, he grew slower and more feeble. In the eighth round he tried to get away from his man to the side of the ring in order to get his breath, but Cribb followed him quickly to the ropes, and Jem had to fight again. True, he hit Cribb several times, but the sting was gone from him, and presently the champion closed and they both fell.

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And now Cribb refused to retreat any more. He stood up and walked into Jem, planting terrible blows, chiefly upon his body, guarding the counters, closing and hurling the lighter man upon the ground. He was confident and happy now. By the eleventh round he knew that he could not lose. And yet Belcher fought on with that amazing persistence, that flickering hope against hope, that glorious courage which in like case to-day, as then, you will often hear called folly. Jem Belcher was beaten then, but he went on till the thirty-first round with a gallantry that endures as an example to this day. Once again his knuckles were driven up and the skin upon them was all torn away. There is no possible doubt but that if Jem had been his old self Cribb could not have beaten him. But that is an unprofitable line of argument.

Belcher never entered the ring again. This battle, though it had lasted only forty minutes, still further reduced his strength. And immediately afterwards he was sentenced to a month in jail for this "breach of the peace." There he caught a severe chill from which he never recovered. His lungs had always been delicate, and he died eighteen months later at the age of thirty, one of the greatest athletic heroes this country has ever known.

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CHAPTER VIII

TOM CRIBB AND MOLINEUX

With those whose charity begins—and ends—at the farthest possible point from home, with those who, to be more particular, born of British blood, cannot speak of the British Lion without referring to mange, who never refer to British traditions or institutions without a sneer, the present writer has little patience. It is necessary to say that at some point in this chronicle in order to avoid misunderstanding. Tutored by Pierce Egan, Borrow, and other and later writers, we are apt to lose all sense of perspective in regarding that one-time wholly British institution, the Prize-Ring. Further, other sources of enlightenment, and especially our schoolmasters, have blinded us to any flaw in the tradition of British Fair Play, the love of which, as already said, is an acquired and not an inherent virtue. And if in this and other chapters some account is given of events where the love of fair play was conspicuously lacking, and which perhaps tend to show that a great tradition can be, after all, but a great superstition, that will not, I trust, be taken as evidence of the writer's anti-English proclivities. At this time of day, the truth, so far as one can discover it, can do no harm—if indeed it ever can. And with that much by way of explanation and warning, we proceed to some account of the two immortal battles between Cribb and Molineux, the black.

The history of the Nigger in Boxing has yet to be fully explored. From the time of Bill Richmond and Molineux (the first black boxers whose names have come down to us) till the time of Jack Johnson, negroes in this country have fought, with certain exceptions, under the severe handicap of unpopularity. Without entering too deeply into the Colour question, we may

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say that this unpopularity comes also from tradition. The vast majority of negro boxers had been slaves or the descendants of slaves. In early days and in the popular imagination they were savages, or almost savages. Also it was recognised from the first that the African negro and his descendants in the West Indies and America were harder-headed than white men, less sensitive about the face and jaw; most black boxers can take without pain or trouble a smashing which would cause the collapse of a white man. Occasionally this is balanced by the nigger's weakness in the stomach—but, one thing with another, the white man is at a disadvantage. But physical inequality is not the only point of difference. Niggers are usually children in temperament, with the children's bad points as well as their good ones. The black man's head is easily turned, and when his personal and physical success over a white man is manifest he generally behaves like the worst kind of spoiled child. In extreme cases his overwhelming sense of triumph knows no bounds at all, and he turns from a primitive man into a fiend. His insolence is appalling. When the black is in this condition ignorant white men lose their heads, their betters are coldly disgusted. There have been exceptions, the most notable of whom was Peter Jackson, whose exploits will be found in the second part of this book. Peter Jackson was a thoroughly good fellow. As a rule, however, it is far better that negroes, if fight they must, should fight amongst themselves. No crowd is ever big-hearted enough, or "sporting" enough, to regard an encounter between white and black with a purely sporting interest.

Thomas Molineux was born of slave parents in the State of Virginia. He himself had been legally freed, and he came over to England, without friends, with the idea of earning a living with his fists. "Thormanby" (the pen name of the late W. Wilmott Dixon) tells us that he had been in the service, in America, of Mr. Pinckney, subsequently United States Ambassador at the Court of St. James's; and he was a good friend to the lonely black on his arrival in London. Molineux put himself in the hands of Bill Richmond, a fellow negro who had been taken

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into the service of the Duke of Northumberland when that nobleman was campaigning in America, and, later, educated at his expense and by him set up as a carpenter. Richmond appears to have been a very well-behaved fellow, and at the time of Molineux's arrival was keeping an inn in the West End of London.

By all that is fair, even in love and war, Molineux should have won the first of the two battles he fought with Tom Cribb. He was aiming high, for his conquests, previous to his challenging the champion, were few and insignificant. However, Tom could do no less than accept, though he underrated the black: and a match was made for £200 a side. The place chosen was Copthall Common, near East Grinstead, in Sussex, and the day December 10th, 1810. Vast numbers of people came down from London to see the fight, travelling through a downpour of rain which made the ring into a mere pool of mud. Cribb was seconded by John Gulley and Joe Ward, and Molineux by Bill Richmond and Paddington Jones. "Time" was kept by Sir Thomas Apreece.

Bets were made that Molineux would not last for half an hour—and, as the event proved, lost.

The men were splendidly matched. Cribb stood 5 feet 10½ inches and weighed 14 stone 2 lb.: Molineux was two inches shorter and almost exactly the same weight. Neither man was in absolutely first-rate condition. Cribb was always inclined to be "beefy" and the Moor (as Egan calls him) was a somewhat dissipated customer. Indeed the majority of fighters in those days were plucky enough in battle, but lacked the higher and more enduring courage to go through a long period of arduous training.

Owing to Gentleman Jackson's perspicacity, the ring had been formed at the bottom of a hill, so that the great crowd of spectators could get an excellent view of the proceedings.

Nothing of any importance occurred in the first four rounds. Molineux was thrown in the first and drew first blood from the champion in the second. The wet ground made foothold precarious, and on that account a comparatively light blow knocked

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a man down. Even so it was Cribb who did the most knocking. The fifth round was very fierce. Each in turn had some little advantage. The round was a long series of rallies, quick leads neatly stopped, hot counters, one of which landed on Cribb's left eye. There was no betting at the end of this round. In the eighth the champion had a good deal the worst of it, but stood and took his gruel like the man he always was. Egan's description of the ninth round may be quoted in full as being typical of that author, with his numerous exaggerations and underlinings.

> "The battle had now arrived at that doubtful state, and things seemed not to prove so easy and tractable as was anticipated, that the betters were rather puzzled to know how they should proceed with success. *Molineux* gave such proofs of *gluttony*, that four to one now made many tremble who had sported it; but still there was a ray of hope remaining from the senseless state in which the *Moor* appeared at the conclusion of the last round. Both the combatants appeared dreadfully *punished*; and Cribb's head was terribly swelled on the left side; *Molineux's nob* was also much the worse for the fight. On Cribb's displaying weakness, the *flash side* were full of palpitation—it was not looked for, and operated more severe upon their minds upon that account. Molineux rallied with a spirit unexpected, bored in upon Cribb, and by a strong blow through the Champion's guard, which he planted in his face, brought him down. It would be futile here to attempt to pourtray the countenances of the interested part of the spectators, who appeared, as it were, panic-struck, and those who were not thoroughly acquainted with the game of the *Champion* began hastily to *hedge-off*; while others, better informed, still placed their confidence on *Cribb*, from what they had seen him hitherto *take*."

By the thirteenth round the betting had changed to 6-4 on the Moor. But the fight remained extraordinarily level until the end of the eighteenth round, when both appeared to be exhausted.

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They were both heavily punished, and on the whole fight perhaps Cribb had been the more severely handled. Both were unrecognisable, and their colour only distinguished them.

In the nineteenth round, during which the half-hour from the beginning was up, Cribb, who for some time past had been "milling on the retreat," tried to land a desperate blow at the moment when Molineux had him up against the ropes. These were in three rows, the top one being five feet from the ground. The black dodged the blow, and, seizing the top rope on either side of Cribb with his two hands, pressed upon the champion with all his might. Cribb could neither hit, nor fall. The seconds on either side argued the propriety of separating the men: but the umpires decided that no such interference was allowable. One of the combatants must fall before a second touched either. At that moment about two hundred of the onlookers, infuriated at the black man's behaviour, rushed the outer ropes and pressed upon the ring-side. Several men snatched at Molineux's fingers, which still clung to the top rope, and tried to dislodge them. Some say that one or more of the black's fingers were broken, others that they were at least injured. But all the time Molineux was resting and getting his wind, his head down on Cribb's chest, his weight thrown forward upon his body. At last, what with his own efforts and the people plucking at his opponent's hands, Cribb got free and retreated towards the nearest corner. A less courageous man would have contrived to slip down. As it was, Molineux caught him, and, avoiding a hard left with which Cribb lunged at his body, seized the champion's head under his arm and proceeded to punish him with short, jolting blows, from which presently Cribb fell exhausted to the ground. He brought Cribb down again the next round as well. The twenty-second round, Egan tells us, was "of no importance," and he leaves it at that, whilst we sadly reflect how many rounds of nowadays, tediously described in detail, deserve the same fate.

It was at the end of the next round that Molineux should have won, though Pierce Egan entirely omits the incident from his

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THE BOXING MATCH BETWEEN RICHARD HUMPHREYS AND DANIEL MENDOZA ON THE 9TH OF JANUARY, 1788.

"It was decided on an oak stage of twenty-four feet square. On the combatants mounting the stage, the odds were two to one on Humphreys. In the first round Mendoza obtained the advantage, and kept it for near twenty minutes. Humphreys then got the lead, and retained it about eight minutes; when, after a well-contested fight, it terminated in his favour. The print represents Johnson as second to Humphreys, and Ryan to Mendoza. Of the figures surrounding the stage sixteen are portraits of amateurs."

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full account, merely observing, in another volume of *Boxiana* (where he makes a note upon the negro's death in Ireland):—

> "His first contest with *Cribb* will long be remembered by the Sporting World. It will also not be forgotten, if Justice holds the scales, that his *colour* alone prevented him from becoming the hero of that fight."

The following is Egan's exact account of the twenty-third and twenty-fourth rounds:—

> "TWENTY-THIRD.—The wind of both the combatants appearing somewhat damaged, they sparred some time to recruit it, when Cribb put in a blow on the left eye of *Molineux*, which hitherto had escaped *milling*. The *Moor* ran in, gave Cribb a severe hit on the body, and threw him heavily.
>
> "TWENTY-FOURTH.—*Molineux* began this round with considerable spirit, and some hits were exchanged, when Cribb was thrown. The betting tolerably even."

Now at the end of the twenty-second round Molineux was doing better than the champion, and the betting was 4-1 on him. The crowd at the ring side shouted: "Now, Tom, now! Don't be beat by the nigger." But all the same Cribb went down at the end of the twenty-third round utterly done. What followed throws no shadow upon the character of Tom Cribb himself. From all we can gather he was a perfectly straight and honest bruiser. But he had been badly knocked about, and Joe Ward, one of his seconds, was desperately afraid that he would never get him up to the scratch by the call of time. There seems to be, indeed, no doubt that Cribb was, but for the squeezing against the ropes, fairly beaten. Ward was a clever rascal, and he ran across the ring to Molineux's corner and accused Bill Richmond of putting bullets into his principal's hands.[1] He must have known

[1] *Pugilistica*, by Henry Downs Miles; *Boxers and Their Battles*, by "Thormanby."

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perfectly well that this was false, just as he must have known, incidentally, that such foul play would do far more harm to the striker than to his opponent. But the altercation achieved its purpose, and Cribb got a good deal more than his due thirty seconds in which to recover.

Immediately after this the black got a fit of shivering, as by now, despite the pace at which they had been fighting, the chill of the December day had got into his bones, fresh as he was from a warm climate. Molineux weakened rapidly, though, urged by his seconds, he fought on till the fortieth round. Of the end of this battle Egan says:—

> "This (the 34th) was the last round of what might be termed fighting, in which *Molineux* had materially the worst of it; but the battle was continued to the 39th, when *Cribb* evidently appeared the best man, and at its conclusion, the Moor *for the first time complained*, that '*he could fight no more!*' but his seconds, who viewed the nicety of the point, persuaded him to try the *chance* of another round, to which request he acquiesced, when he fell from weakness, reflecting additional credit on the manhood of his brave *conqueror*, *Tom Cribb*."

What additional credit is reflected by knocking down an exhausted man, I find it a little difficult to perceive. Whether we like the fact or not, Molineux should have been Champion of England that day, a day which is indeed black for the fair name of good sport. No possible good can come of trying, as Pierce Egan did, to disguise it. The referee was grossly unfair in not stopping Joe Ward's trick, which he can hardly have failed to see. It should also be added that the crowd hooted and jeered at Molineux throughout the fight—but then, crowds are like that. Crowds are seldom genuinely sporting in the finest sense. It should be said, however, that the Stock Exchange gave the black a warm reception after the fight, and sent him away with a present of £45.

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We may be sure, however, that Tom Cribb himself treated his antagonist with chivalry. This is manifest in the fact that Molineux in after years did his utmost in support of the champion, sparring at his benefit performance, and, unasked, selling tickets for it.

At the time the black man was anxious for another trial; and the following letter appeared in *The Times* for Christmas Day, 1810:—

"St. Martin's Street,
"To Mr. Thomas Cribb. "Leicester Square,
"*Dec.* 21*st*, 1810."

"Sir,—My friends think, that had the weather on last Tuesday, the day upon which I contended with you, not been so unfavourable, I should have won the battle: I, therefore, challenge you to a second meeting, at any time within two months, for such sum as those gentlemen who place confidence in me may be pleased to arrange.

"As it is possible this letter may meet the public eye, I cannot omit the opportunity of expressing a confident hope, that the circumstance of my being of a different colour to that of a people amongst whom I have sought protection will not in any way operate to my prejudice.

"I am, sir,
"Your most obedient, humble servant,
"T. Molineux."

"*Witness*, J. Scholfield."

The announcement of Cribb's acceptance of the challenge was given in *The Times* for December 29th, and the match was made for a purse of 600 guineas.

It took place at Thistleton Gap, in the county of Rutland, on September 28th, 1811, and though a much shorter affair, the second battle is hardly less famous than the other. The final blow of this encounter is depicted in a print published less than a week afterwards, a reproduction of which will be found in this book.

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This time Captain Barclay trained Cribb to a hair, so that all his beef was gone. His system was a savage one and must have killed some men, would certainly kill many boxers of the present day. But it agreed with Cribb, much though he is said to have disliked the process at the time. Cribb's preparation lasted for eleven weeks, and his weight was brought down from 16 stone to 13 stone 6 lb. He was probably the first really trained man that ever stepped into a ring.

If the truth is to be known, Barclay had a special reason for making a good job of the champion's training. He was a good amateur boxer himself, and was used to put the gloves on with the pros at Jackson's rooms in Bond Street. But, "Thormanby" informs us, he kept a special pair of gloves there for his own use. Whether they were harder than the ordinary we do not know, but they were probably much lighter! The day on which he had arranged to spar with Molineux he arrived after the black, who was already wearing his special mufflers. He could not very well say: "Here, those are my particular gloves," and so had to be content with the regulation puddings. The result was that Molineux broke one of his ribs; and now he wanted to be even with him, though by proxy.

Molineux did not train. As already suggested, he was a self-indulgent fellow and a spoiled child. He went on a sparring tour round the country with Tom Belcher (Jem's brother), and Bill Richmond. They were not strong-minded guardians, and only just before the fight the black ate a whole chicken, and an apple pie, washing them down with a prodigious draught of porter.

When the men met before a huge crowd of about 20,000 people, the black was so amazed at Cribb's appearance that at first he could hardly recognise him. The simple blackamoor had not believed in the virtue of getting fit: his strength, skill, and undoubted courage were enough for him. And here, shaking him by the hand, was a hard-faced fellow without an ounce of tallow on him, all bone and long, rippling muscles—a very different Cribb to the well-larded customer he had fought on

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Copthall Common. And none of the champion's strength or stamina was gone—rather the contrary. Cribb had Gulley and Ward in his corner again, while Bill Gibbons and Richmond looked after Molineux. There is little to be said of the battle itself. It was fought on a stage this time, twenty-five feet square. Cribb scored the first knock-down. Captain Barclay recommended his man to let the black beat himself and to hold back. In the third round Molineux by an overhand blow closed Tom's right eye, the fist hitting him on the cheek bone, immediately under the eye, so that the swelling took an upward direction. On his side Cribb was perfectly confident, but too old a hand not to be extremely careful, and wisely he gave most of his attention to Molineux's body—always a good policy with a black man, especially when he is out of training. He nearly doubled up the Moor with one terrific right, and yet the plucky fellow pulled himself together immediately afterwards and threw Cribb heavily to the boards.

In a short while Cribb showed severe signs of punishment about the head and face, but he kept smiling amiably, which drove his adversary to madness, so that in the sixth round he was literally capering about in sheer frenzy, hitting the air wildly. Cribb came up to him and knocked him down. Again and again this happened, though at intervals Molineux regained his composure and fought well. In the ninth round, with a tremendous right-hander, the champion broke his jaw, after which he failed by half a minute to come up to time. But this was overlooked, and at the end of the eleventh round, when the battle had only lasted nineteen minutes and ten seconds, he sent home a left which knocked Molineux clean out of time: and the black was carried senseless from the ring.

Cribb made about £400 out of this fight directly, though no doubt this sum was largely increased by perquisites later on. Captain Barclay, by judicious betting, made about £10,000. And "through the kind interference of Mr. Jackson," as Egan puts it, a collection realised £50 extra for the black, whose share of the purse would be £200.

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It was on the occasion of this battle that the editor of the *Edinburgh Star* wrote :—

> " When the amount of money collected for the relief of British prisoners in France, now suffering for the cause of their country, scarcely amounts to £49,000, there is—Blush, O Britain!—there is £50,000 depending upon a *boxing match*! The Champion Cribb's arrival, and on a Sunday, too! on a visit to a gentleman of Aberdeen (we should be glad to know what kind of gentleman he is) as if he, the meritorious Cribb, did honour to the City of Aberdeen by his presence! "

(The gentleman of Aberdeen was Captain Barclay, who had property in that county and brought Cribb up there to train.)

There are two sorts of amusement to be derived from this quotation, and one of them, having regard to recent memories, is a very bitter sort.

After this, Tom Cribb retired from the Ring, and became, like the majority of successful bruisers of his own and of later times, a publican: and thenceforward the Union Arms in Panton Street, Haymarket, became a very popular house of call with all members of the Fancy.

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CHAPTER IX

JACK SCROGGINS AND NED TURNER

In the days of bare knuckles there was only one champion, and though there were one or two exceptions—Tom Sayers is the most notable—little men, or men little by comparison, were quite out of the running. Champion, therefore, meant Champion—the best man that could be found. There was no qualification of the title—no middle, welter, feather, bantam, fly, or paper-weight. If a first-rate boxer of eight stone liked to fight another of sixteen stone—I suppose he could, but, rather naturally, he didn't. In the old annals, though there is some record of the lesser men—lesser very often only in size and not in skill or courage—they are overshadowed by the big fellows far more than they are to-day. Even now, of course, from the spectacular point of view, big men—heavy-weights—cause far more excitement. And, as a rule, a good fight between two good big men is better worth seeing than a good fight between two good little men. The dramatic atmosphere is more intense, blows are harder, there is (though it is overrated) a certain splendour in sheer size.

But championship battles both now and in the past have been by no means necessarily the best battles: rather the contrary. Many a pot-house quarrel has provided better sport than a stupendously advertised World's Championship with heaven only knows how ridiculously many thousands of pounds "hanging" upon the issue.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were, then, plenty of good little men, though we hear less about them than we do of the champions. Jack Scroggins was one, Ned Turner another. Scroggins may, by present standards, be called a light middle-weight: he was just under 11 stone. Turner was 10 stone 4 lb.—just over the present light-weight limit.

The first time they fought the ring was broken by rowdy

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spectators, and the result was a draw. The second battle took place at Sawbridgeworth on June 10th, 1817, and Jack Scroggins, who had never yet been beaten, staked £120 to £80 on the event.

Ned Turner—the Welshman referred to by George Borrow in the passage quoted in the Introduction—was a very fine boxer, and at the outset put up an almost impenetrable defence. Some minutes in the first round went by before the two men really began to fight. Scroggins was accustomed to dash in and hit his man at the very beginning, but something in Turner's attitude daunted him, and he held off. But a start had to be made, and after a while he did rush, came close to his man, and gave him a light hit from which he fell. Scroggins had been a sailor and was a jolly little man, ever eager to see the bright side of a situation. In the present case he was absurdly elated at his trifling success, and dashed in again. This time the Welshman caught him hard on the face twice, following these blows with another in the ribs, but when they wrestled for a fall he was underneath. Scroggins saw now that he had taken on a better man than he had ever faced before, and was correspondingly cautious. Round after round Turner showed himself quicker with his fists, the sailor stronger in a close. In the fourth round Turner sent in a vicious blow on his opponent's neck which, Scroggins said later on, decided the fight. It is true that he threw Turner again and again after that, but he was a hurt man. At the end of the fifth round a troop of Yeomanry were seen approaching, clattering down the lane which ran alongside the field of battle. It was thought at first by the ring officials and spectators that these soldiers had come to spoil sport; but as a matter of fact they had heard of the fight and had merely determined to see it.

After this the exchanges were almost equal. Each man planted severe blows, and Turner was undermost when they wrestled for a fall. It was not until the twelfth round that he succeeded in throwing Scroggins. In the following round Turner landed a blow which sent his opponent almost spinning, but the sailorman did not take advantage of it to fall, but dashed in again with commendable pluck. Turner was now a hot favourite.

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He was knocked down in the next round, but not heavily. He was quick and agile at close quarters, though a bad wrestler; and he generally managed to put in a series of fierce half-arm blows before Scroggins could hold him. The seventeenth round was interesting, as it gave an instance of the same kind of temper in Scroggins, remarkable in Humphries when he fought Mendoza, the Jew. Turner gave him a mighty hit in the face which must have hurt him considerably. He turned round, not from the force of the blow, but in real fear, the instinctive desire to get away—even to run away, out of reach. And then, even as he turned, Jack Scroggins remembered himself, swung right round in his stride and dashed at his adversary again. As they came together Turner hit him un mercifully, but was yet again underneath when they fell to the ground.

And so the fight went on, Scroggins invariably getting the worst of the exchange of blows, Turner the wrestling. The twenty-second was a tremendous round. They began with a furious rally, giving blow for blow with all their might, got away from each other in a moment, and then at it again. Scroggins charged in with his head down, and Turner met him with a vicious uppercut which caught him on the neck; and then, in trying for a fall, was underneath once more. The plucky little sailor was now visibly distressed and his wind was badly touched. He gasped for breath, and though he made his characteristic dash in the next round, it was clear that he was being out-fought. The betting on Turner rose to 5 and 6-1, and Scroggins tottered at the scratch, so weak now that when he lunged forward to hit he fell over. Turner hit him as he pleased, and Scroggins replied with wild blows which beat the air. He was nearly done by the time they fell in the twenty-fifth round.

The men's seconds, for some reason, instead of keeping opposite corners, nursed their principals between the rounds side by side. As they sat on the knees of their bottle-holders, Turner stretched out a hand and took Scroggins's to show him that he admired his pluck and that there was no ill-will. And then, immediately afterwards, on resuming, he planted a blow in the middle of the sailor's face which knocked him clean off

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his legs. Such is sport. It is a wonderful thing to show your admiration and affection for a man at one moment and then almost in the same breath to hurt him dreadfully in cold blood. No wonder that foreigners think us mad. It was at about this period of the battle that Scroggins had a strong nip of brandy, but he was too far gone for such mild remedies. Again Turner caught him as hard as he could hit, and Scroggins backed away to the side of the ring. Turner beckoned to him and called on him to come and fight, but Scroggins was getting all the rest he could, and Turner in the end had to go after him. The Welshman was still fresh, for all the severe falls that he had suffered. And yet, the sailor with his wind gone, his eyes almost closed, his face swollen and mutilated, though he could not see to hit, even in the thirtieth round he continued to throw his opponent. But Jack Scroggins was quite dazed after that, and only stood at all by the force of his will. Turner upper-cut him again and again. In the thirty-third round he went down before a light hit, and on being carried to his corner gave in. Turner is said to have left the ring with hardly a mark on his face.

But the plucky little sailorman still believed that he was as good as the Welshman, and he challenged Turner to a third battle. This took place at Shepperton, on the Thames, on October 7th, 1818. The fight lasted for over an hour and a half, and Scroggins was again beaten, this time in the thirty-ninth round, when Turner hit him so that he sprawled over the ropes and was quite unable to come up to time. Otherwise it was a repetition of the previous encounter. Turner was by far the better boxer and hit his opponent as he liked. Scroggins was a rushing and dangerous fighter and a really good wrestler, and until he was weakened by repeated blows, ended round after round by throwing Turner to the grass. This time Scroggins was exhausted sooner, but with very real courage refused to give in, and fought as long as he could stand. As in the previous fight, Turner showed himself a chivalrous and sportsmanlike opponent, bearing not the slightest ill-will, nor showing undue elation when he had decisively beaten his indomitable opponent.

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Jack Scroggins and Ned Turner

The following is an advertisement typical of a hundred years ago which corresponds to the kind of thing we are now accustomed to see on the hoardings outside the Albert Hall or the Holborn Stadium.

Holloa! Holloa!! Holloa!!!
A GENTLEMANLY SORT OF A MAN
JACK SCROGGINS
Humbly doffs his Castor to the
SPORTING WORLD.
TO INFORM
THE FANCY
THAT HIS
BENEFIT
AT THE
FIVES COURT, St. Martin's Street,
Leicester Fields, takes place on
WEDNESDAY, APRIL the 25th, 1821,
When all the first-rate Pugilists on the List will Exhibit in a variety of
SCIENTIFIC COMBATS.
The Champion of England, Belcher, Spring, Randall, Oliver, Shelton, Burns, Owen, Turner, Richmond, Martin, Harmer, Cooper, Hickman, Sampson, Eales, etc., have promised SCROGGINS to be
HAND AND GLOVE with him upon this MOST STRIKING OCCASION.

SCROGGINS begs leave to assure the Patrons of Scientific Pugilism that nothing shall be wanting on his part to give the utmost satisfaction; and he trusts that, in being remembered ONCE as a great favourite, he also with the utmost deference humbly hopes, that Scroggins will not be forgotten as an Ould SERVANT, who has afforded the Amateurs Lots of Amusement in

SIXTEEN PRIZE BATTLES,

As the following LIST of his Opponents will show:—

BOOTS	WHITAKER	TURNER	DAV. HUDSON
SMITH	CHURCH	TURNER	DAV. HUDSON
NOSWORTHY	FISHER	MARTIN	HOLT, and
EALES	TURNER	JOSH. HUDSON	PARISH.

In order to prevent his being entirely FLOORED; and that they will lend their support as *Seconds*, towards PICKING HIM UP, Putting him on his Legs, and giving him another *Chance*, whereby SCROGGINS may be enabled to get a House over his *Topper*, where he can

Serve all his CUSTOMERS!!!

And Sing, as an old Sailor, God save the King!

To commence at Two O'Clock,—Tickets, 3s. each, to be had at all the Sporting Houses.
*** All Tickets issued for February the 27th will be admitted. Tickets to be had at the Bar.

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CHAPTER X

JACK RANDALL AND NED TURNER

JACK RANDALL, the Irishman, whom George Borrow describes as the King of the Light-weights, was a few pounds over the ten stone which is the generally recognised light-weight limit of to-day. He was a frank-faced, open-hearted fellow, a good and chivalrous sportsman, strong-willed, courageous, and by no means a fool. In the year 1818 he was at the height of his fame, but was anxious to fight one or two more battles, before taking the customary tavern and retiring. And a match was accordingly made with Ned Turner to take place on Crawley Downs on December 5th of that year for £100 a side. Both in height, weight, and age, the men were evenly matched. The betting was in favour of Randall. Turner's seconds were Tom Owen and Bill Richmond, the black; Randall's, Tom Oliver and White.

As so often happened in the days of bare knuckles, the men were a long time making up their minds to begin, and five minutes went by before the first blow was struck. Then as now, boxers realised the prime importance of a good start, of landing, if possible, a terrific and discouraging smasher in the first round. Many fights have been won like that. In this battle the first two rounds occupied twenty minutes. But in the second Randall landed more often and much the harder of the two. They boxed at long range, and each seemed to be mortally afraid of the other, or rather, to respect him. Once a blow was struck by either, his opponent hastened to return it with all speed and due interest. In the third round the spectators and even the men's seconds became impatient. The round lasted thirteen minutes, and the pauses between bouts of fighting were so protracted that on-lookers suggested to Tom Owen that he might light his pipe,

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whilst Tom Cribb asked for his night-cap and told his neighbours to wake him up when the fighting started again. Each was determined to give the other no unnecessary chance. When they did get going both boxed extremely well. Randall went mainly for the body at first, and Turner drew blood from the Irishman's mouth and nose. At the end of the sixth round and about an hour from the start, Turner was showing signs of weariness. He lowered his hands whenever Randall was out of reach, and he was bleeding profusely.

They now began to fight hard. Most rounds ended in a throw, at which Randall as a rule showed himself the stronger. In the eleventh round it was seen that Randall was rather the better, though backers were not yet lacking for his opponent. But presently Turner was worked round so that the sun was in his eyes, and Randall put in a terrific hit on the face. Turner replied with a hard right in the stomach. Then Turner scored the more hits in a fierce rally, but these were not hard enough to do a great deal of damage.

The first knock-down blow came from Randall in the thirteenth round. He shot in a hard left which sent Turner's head back and then immediately repeated it, whereupon Turner fell. He was bleeding a good deal. The Irishman hit less now at the body, finding Turner's defence for his head easier to break through. In the sixteenth round Turner hit several times but weakly; in the seventeenth, however, he seized Randall and threw him clean out of the ring. But the effort was a costly one: it did little harm to Randall, whilst Turner stood leaning against the ropes panting. Randall came up for the next round comparatively fresh, and before long he knocked Turner down again.

Two hours had been passed by the time twenty-four rounds had been fought. There were ten more rounds and these only occupied twenty minutes. The reason was that Turner was losing strength rapidly, and Randall knocked or threw him down without much trouble. Turner's pluck was magnificent. Round after round he got the worst of it, but came up each time with apparent confidence and a smile upon his bruised and bleeding

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face. In the twenty-seventh round Turner hurled himself at his opponent and hit him so hard as to drive him right away, though without causing his downfall. Randall was now refreshed by a pull at the brandy-flask, but Turner was yet able to stop his best blows and to give good ones in return. But the tide of the battle had set definitely against him. Randall ended one round by knocking him down with a tremendous body-blow and the next by a throw.

When Turner came quite jauntily from his second's knee for the thirty-first round, the crowd began to call out: "Take him away: he's too game." But he went on and Randall finished the bout with another body-blow. Some of the onlookers begged Ned to give in at the end of the thirty-second, but he shook his head. The next round was very short, and Turner was severely knocked down. Again the cry was raised: "Don't let him fight any more." However, he came up, full of pluck and perfectly cool, for the thirty-fourth, and did his best to keep Randall away. The Irishman, however, sent in several blows, the last of which on the side of Turner's head, knocked him down so that he could not come up at the call of time.

The crowd pressed round Randall in congratulation, but he pushed them away and went across to Turner to shake hands with perfect good friendship. Turner, sick at heart and hurt as he was, patted Randall on the back. Never was there less ill-feeling between any two men.

Randall is said to have been a natural fighter in the most literal sense, never having taken a single lesson, but buying his experience solely in the ring.

The Nonpareil, as he was called, had two more fights before finally retiring from the Prize-Ring. Both of these were with the baker, Jack Martin: whom he first defeated in nineteen rounds and fifty minutes, and then in one round of eight and a half minutes. Martin's very long reach proved a difficulty to Randall in the first fight, for though his rushing and slogging were very powerful and not devoid of skill, his footwork was clumsy and he had no idea of side-stepping or ducking away from the baker's

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long arms. But in each of these fights he proved that Martin's body was weak, and he forced himself in to close fighting and hammered his man about the ribs and stomach until the rigid guard he kept up to protect his head was weakened or lowered. Martin was very plucky, but besides the natural advantage of reach, he was nearly a stone the heavier of the two; so that the highest credit is due to the Irishman for his signal defeat of him.

For some years Randall kept The Hole in the Wall, in Chancery Lane, but like many another fighter, he died whilst still a young man, in 1828.

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CHAPTER XI

BILL NEATE AND TOM HICKMAN

PERHAPS one of the best known of William Hazlitt's essays is that called *The Fight*, though it is the coach drive towards Hungerford and some very intimate and exact discussions upon training which really interested the writer. The fight in question was that between Bill Neate and Tom Hickman, known as "The Gasman," or, simply, "Gas."

Hitherto Hickman's chief title to consideration had been the remarkably short work he had made of at least three sturdy opponents. He had thrashed Peter Crawley in fourteen and a half minutes, Gipsy Cooper twice, once in a quarter of an hour and once in three minutes, and he had taken twelve and a half minutes to defeat Tom Oliver. Neate had a good record too, but he had taken an hour and a half to beat Oliver, so that "Gas" was by way of being the favourite. As a matter of fact history shows that because A beats C with less difficulty than B, it by no means follows that A is invincible by B. It is interesting to know that Neate's backer on this occasion was that same Mr. Weare who was shortly afterwards murdered by Thurtell.

The fight took place at Newbury, in Berkshire, on December 11th, 1821. Neate's seconds were Tom Belcher and Harry Harmer, Hickman's were Tom Spring and Tom Shelton.

Neate fought with a well-extended guard which Hickman found very difficult to pass. He pivoted about, always presenting a good defence. But after a long time sparring, "Gas" charged in, got through his man's guard, and hit him in the face, jumping away out of danger again. He repeated this again and again, whilst Neate's replies were poor. Again Hickman charged. This, he thought to himself, was going to be a soft job like the others:

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JAMES BELCHER, of Bristol (Champion of England), 1798-1809.

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but Neate had got used to him by this time and met him with a beautiful straight left in the throat which made Hickman gasp. Again " Gas " tried to rush, and Neate slipped and fell.

The second round found the Gasman still grinning with confidence. He tried to get over Neate's guard with hard chopping blows, but these only fell on the shoulder and did no harm at all. Then there was a hard rally, and Neate sent home another straight left which made his opponent reel: but Hickman was a plucky fellow, and though he found Neate a disappointing antagonist, he would still try to win the encounter off-hand. Neate tried another left which failed, and shortly afterwards slipped down to avoid " Gas's " in-fighting, which was not to his taste. Hickman's grin was still confident, but he got the worst of the third round. After a sharp exchange Neate knocked him down, and himself fell from the force of his own blow and the clumsy way in which he stood.

The decisive blow of the fight was struck in the fourth round. Hickman aimed a tremendous right-hander at Neate, which he avoided, himself replying with the left. Describing this and the previous round, Hazlitt wrote:—

> " I saw (Neate's) teeth clenched together and his brows knit close against the sun. He held out both his arms at full length straight before him, like two sledge-hammers, and raised his left an inch or two higher. The Gasman could not get over this guard—they struck mutually and fell, but without advantage on either side. . . . The Gasman aimed a mortal blow at his adversary's neck with his right hand, and failing from the length he had to reach, the other returned it with his left at full swing, planted a tremendous blow on his cheek-bone and eyebrow, and made a red ruin of that side of his face."

Hickman never stood a chance after that. His smile was gone when he came up, plucky but weak, for the fifth round. Neate hit him thrice sharply and then sent in a smashing right

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on the mouth, which "grassed" him. He had a terrible time in the sixth, for he tried once more to rush his man and did succeed momentarily in pinning him to the ropes. But there Neate's greater skill came to his aid. He kept perfectly cool, guarded a couple of dangerous blows, and then countered, first with left, then with right, following one with another at top speed until "Gas" gave ground, until his retreat became indeed a rout. Then Neate coming after him, went for his body and planted four terrible blows about the ribs and stomach, the last of which sent Hickman down. So ill was the Gasman after this round that his second had to hold him tight to prevent him from rolling off his knee.

Neate himself was puffing and blowing a good deal, and his thumb gave him considerable pain. He had cut and sprained it severely when he made his terrific hit in the fourth round, and it had been in severe use more than once since then. But he was quite happy. He knew that he had only to keep cool and take his time and the battle was assuredly his. Again he gave "Gas" two tremendous blows, but the latter stood up bravely. Neate was even too determined not to be hurried. He might with advantage have done more in this, the seventh round, which ended by his slipping to grass.

When Hickman came up again he was laughing, actually and audibly laughing! He knew that he could stand very little more, but he was quite determined to discourage Neate to the best of his ability. But a swift left-hander caught him on the right eye and sent him down, and, as we should say now, out. He was quite insensible for nearly half a minute, lying inert in the arms of Tom Spring. Then just when time should have been called for the ninth round some roughs broke into the ring and had to be whipped out. This gave Hickman a full minute's rest, and he was able to stagger up to the scratch. This time Neate hit clumsily and both fell.

The next few rounds showed that the Gasman was of an indomitable courage. Each time he came up with a wry smile on his battered face and did his best to rush his opponent. Neate's

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wind was now much affected and his hitting was weaker. The opportunity of speedy victory he had let slip, and though he was still getting the better of the fight, he made a poor show.

In the fourteenth round it was seen that "Gas" was nearly blind, and he had to be brought up to the scratch by his seconds. He refused to give in and stood helpless to be knocked down. The sixteenth and seventeenth rounds were the same. The Gasman's seconds were greatly to blame for not throwing up the sponge. It was not for want of urging by the crowd. The eighteenth was the last round. Tom Hickman did not know what he was doing. He tottered in the middle of the ring when his seconds left him, with his hands down. Neate went up to him and gave him a gentle push, which was all that was needed. The whole fight was over in less than half an hour.

The Gasman had a tremendous reputation, and great surprise was caused by his defeat. He was killed precisely a year later, being thrown out of a gig when driving away from another prize-fight.

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CHAPTER XII

TOM SPRING AND BILL NEATE

We come now to another of the outstanding figures of the Prize-Ring, the famous Tom Spring. This man's real name was Winter—"sharp as Winter, kind as Spring"—as Borrow has it. He was born in the county of Hereford in 1795. His height was 5 feet. 11¾ inches, and in perfect condition he weighed 13 stone 6 lb. During his career he fought a dozen main battles, being beaten once by Ned Painter, whom he had previously defeated. They refused to fight out the rubber because they had become fast friends, and Spring, who was perfectly confident of winning the third time, did not wish to risk that friendship.

It was Tom Cribb, visiting the West of England on a sparring tour, who inflamed the young man's imagination. As a lad Winter drove a butcher's cart, but he had a spirit above this humdrum avocation. And, contriving to win the old Champion's confidence, he came to London and immediately made a name for himself. On Cribb's retirement he became Champion, and remained so until he himself retired in favour of Jem Ward.

In the year following Neate's victory over the Gasman, a match was arranged between him and Tom Spring for £200 a side, which, after being once postponed, finally took place at Hinkley Downs, near Andover, on May 20th, 1823. This was the first real fight for the championship since the defeat of Molineux by Cribb in 1811. The betting was in favour of Spring, though Neate did not lack support. He was seconded by Tom Belcher and Harry Harmer, while the old champion and Ned Painter, his late antagonist and warmest friend, looked after Spring.

It was a very short battle and was virtually won in the first

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round, and before a serious blow had been struck. The men faced each other, and it was a long time before any effective move was made. Spring's attitude was very much the same as the typical "English" attitude of to-day: that is, left foot some eighteen inches in front of the right, left knee slightly bent, left arm out ready to lead, right thrown across the mark to guard. Neate's position has already been described. It was very stiff and awkward and effective only against a slow boxer. The men exchanged and stopped blows without one landing for some minutes. Once, when Neate sent in a specially hard smack and Spring stopped it coolly with his elbow, he grinned good-naturedly. Then he lowered his hands to tempt Bill Neate to come for him, raising them again the instant the other moved. After a few blows on either side which did at last get home, Spring landed twice on the face, so that Neate turned. The next instant he whipped round, just as though panic had seized him and he had then thought better of it, and rushed the champion to his corner. Tom Belcher cried out to him to go in. "Now's the time!" But Spring kept perfectly cool, and with deliberation guarded each furious blow that his opponent sent in. Neate tried several times to break through that guard, still keeping Spring at bay in his corner. If he had gone on trying, he might have succeeded. But Spring's coolness and skill daunted him. He hesitated, and in a measure lost heart. He experienced, at any rate, a momentary feeling of helplessness; and as he hesitated Spring dashed in and fought his way out of the corner. The greater will was Spring's. Neate closed now to save being hit, and lifted his man nearly off his feet, but Spring was cleverer than he at wrestling and in a moment had twisted him round and thrown him, falling heavily upon him.

When they set to for the second round both were very cautious once more. At last Neate shot out his left with all his thirteen stone odd behind it, but Spring threw back his head to avoid it, and countered instantly with a tremendous smash between the eyes, which drew blood immediately. Neate sprang in for his revenge, but once again his opponent made the blow short by

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moving and sent in another hard one on the head which swung Bill round. For a moment it looked as though he would fall, but he staggered, and got his feet firmly planted again, and went for Spring. The champion, however, caught him by the neck, gave him two or three hard half-arm blows and hurled him to the ground.

Spring tried a very hard left at the opening of the third round, which Neate stopped. There were several exchanges, and Neate was laughing happily, or tried to give that appearance. He struck once with his right—his best blow—but it landed on the point of Spring's elbow, which he had thrown across his face. The impact was tremendous, and the small bone of Neate's fore-arm was broken. He closed and went down under his man.

The champion's defence seemed to be impregnable, and Neate again experienced the feeling of helplessness, of inferiority which spells defeat. He tried again and again for the head without success, then changed suddenly and attacked the body, only to be stopped once more. Spring countered twice on the nose and threw Neate, whose friends were calling to him to remember his famous right. In the fifth round Spring punished him severely, sending him down at last with a blow on the right ear, and hitting him again as he was falling. To some of Spring's supporters it appeared as though neither blow had landed and that Neate had gone down without being hit at all. However, Jackson, who was acting as umpire, when appealed to, ruled otherwise.

The next round found Bill Neate "with bellows to mend," whilst his opponent was fresh and confident. Spring hit him twice on the face and knocked him down.

The champion refused to run any risks though it was clearly evident by now that he had his man beaten. He stepped away from his blows, and refused to run risks by dashing heedlessly in. Presently, however, he drew Neate's guard with a feint, and let fly left and right on the face, knocking his antagonist down.

The last round, the eighth, made Neate "look like a novice," as they say to-day. Spring went for his man and hit him as he pleased. Bill tried to use his left, but each blow was ill-timed and

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ill-judged and went nowhere near the champion. Spring then sent in a right-hander on the face which knocked his man clean off his legs. On the call of time Neate held out his hand to the champion, complaining that he could fight no more with his broken arm. The whole mill was over in thirty-seven minutes.

Neate was plucky to fight so long as he did with a broken arm, but we cannot make too much fuss about it, for several men have fought for longer with similar injuries. He was, too, beaten at the outset, as we have shown, simply by force of character. In his heart of hearts he gave in then, though he took plenty of punishment afterwards bravely enough. But it is braver to go on wanting to win than to endure hurt with resignation.

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CHAPTER XIII

TOM SPRING AND JACK LANGAN

THE year 1824 was the climax of the best period of the Prize-Ring. There were good fights in later years, as we shall see, first-rate champions, high skill, noble endurance: but the institution of the Ring was never in such good case again. And the most notable events of that year in pugilism were the two great fights between the Champion of England, Tom Spring, and the Champion of Ireland, Jack Langan.

This combat, which was for £300 a side, took place at Worcester Racecourse on January 7th. The men were splendidly matched, in years and in physique. Langan was twenty-five, Spring twenty-nine. There was no serious difference in their weight or height. Spring was the better built man, with the body of an all-round athlete; whilst Langan was awkwardly made, hard, angular, with enormous hands. He was known as a brave and skilful fighter, though he had never fought a battle yet with any men of the first rank.

The magistrates in the neighbourhood of Worcester had at first shown signs of opposition to the fight, but considerable influence was brought to bear upon them, so many great sportsmen were interested in the event, that they gave way; and, far from being secret and improvised, the arrangements for the great battle were as deliberate and as open as those for a public funeral. Stands were built about the racecourse, a special ring was constructed, and accommodation, it is said, for at least 20,000 spectators was provided. All the roads of England, so to speak, converged upon Worcester, and men paid a guinea for a shake-down in the loft of a small ale-house. Indeed, the people of Worcester subscribed £200 to the agents of Spring and Langan

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to make sure of the battle taking place there, so certain were they of the harvest to come. Onlookers were in their places two hours before the fight began, and the rigging of vessels lying in the Severn, which flowed beside the course, was full of those who could not raise the five shillings, which was the smallest price for a place on the stands.

Spring was once more seconded by Tom Cribb and Ned Painter, Lord Deerhrust acting as his umpire. Josh. Hudson and Tom Reynolds attended to Langan, whilst his umpire was Sir H. Goodricke. Colonel Berkeley was chosen by these umpires as the referee.

The first round was uneventful. The men were excessively cautious and few blows were struck. It was observed that Langan's guard was highly efficient. Spring finally got in a heavy left on his opponent's right eye and Langan went down. At the next meeting the Irishman went for the body, but Spring's defence was very sure, and the two stood toe to toe watching for an opportunity for some time. Finally Spring landed with both hands, and later knocked Langan down with quite a slight hit. During this round one of the stands overlooking the ring collapsed and many people were severely injured. The two boxers waited to find out if any one had been killed before continuing to fight. Fortunately, broken arms and legs were the most serious injuries. This untoward event resulted in about 2000 people who had occupied seats being added to the crowd standing between the wrecked stand and the ring. Owing to this, violent pressure was, from then onwards till the end of the battle, thrown against the ropes, so that the outer ring was entirely broken, and the inner was constantly altering in shape, sometimes hardly leaving the men ten square feet to fight in. No doubt, as usual, many roughs were present, but the breaking of the ring on this occasion may reasonably be attributed to accident rather than a deliberate plan.

Langan still went for the body, and Spring, than whom there was never a cooler boxer, waited for the attack each time; and as Langan lunged forward from long range, lowering his head as he

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did so, the champion caught him on the face. There was a great deal of wrestling throughout this battle and in the early rounds Spring had been heavily thrown. In the eighth round, the champion who felt himself to be the better boxer, knowing well that he had been getting the worst of the throws, fought much harder and drove Langan into his corner. But he had been hitting the Irishman about his head with great force, and, like Jem Belcher with Tom Cribb, he had injured his hands. The knuckles were not actually driven up, but Spring's hands "puffed" easily, and already they were swollen and soft, and each blow, especially with the left hand, was an agony to him. This round ended with both men slipping down. So far Spring was unmarked, while Langan was already a good deal disfigured and bleeding. A little later he sent in a tremendous left on the mark, but he had misjudged his distance and the blow was short and did no harm. A good bit of boxing followed, for Spring countered and the Irishman ducked from the blow, whereupon the champion caught him with a sharp upper-cut; then he closed and threw Langan hard. The thirteenth round was a hard one for Langan, Spring hitting him severely on the nose with the right and closing his eye with a smashing left.

It must be remembered that all this time the champion's hands were growing more and more soft, that each blow he struck was more painful than the one before. And yet all the time he kept quietly confident, never grew flustered, and, besides throwing his man, still hit him hard. He, too, was often thrown, and the nineteenth round found both men panting with their exertions. In the next round Spring fought with tremendous vigour. He dashed at his man, drove him round the ring, then closed and hurled him to the grass, but refrained from falling on him which, by the rules of that day, he was entitled to do.

The Irish champion was now definitely getting the worst of it, though Spring showed signs of weakness. However, he ended the twenty-seventh round by a right-hand blow on the face which lifted Langan from the ground. Langan came up again and yet again, but now always to be knocked or thrown down. He was

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much marked, but had been perfectly trained and was a man of iron constitution. Spring was looking pale and was clearly growing weak, but his skill and judgment were never at fault. By the thirty-fifth round the officials had all they could do to keep a clear space in the ring for the men to fight in. The rounds now were very short. In the forty-fourth Langan made his last desperate effort and did, in fact, hit as well as Spring, the round ending by both going down together. After that, however, his strength had quite gone. The fight went on till seventy-five rounds had been fought in two hours and ten minutes. Finally Spring sent in a right-hander on the neck which knocked Langan clean out of time. He lost consciousness, and when he recovered on Cribb's knee wanted to go on, furious when his seconds restrained him, mortified to find that time had indeed been called. He rose, but immediately fell back into Cribb's arms.

It was generally held that Spring would have won much sooner but for the puffing of his left hand. His right was injured too, but remained effective if painful until the end.

After this battle, Tom Reynolds, Langan's second and friend, complained that his principal had not been given fair play, and that the crowd had been allowed by Spring's backers to break the ring because his antagonist was an Irishman. In point of fact, the breaking of the ring was no more to Langan's disadvantage than the champion's. Anyhow, Langan was not satisfied, and a little later challenged Spring again, this time for the very large prize (in those days) of £500 a side. Langan stipulated for a raised and boarded stage, such as had been used for the battle between Cribb and Molineux. At first the champion objected to this, because he knew Langan's wrestling powers, and that to be thrown upon boards is a much worse business than upon grass. However, he agreed in the end, for he saw Langan's point, namely, that a crowd cannot break a ring so easily upon a raised stage as in an open field.

The second match took place at Birdham Bridge, near Chichester, on June 8th, 1824. Once again there was an enormous crowd, and this time the ring was protected not only by being

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raised, but by a circle formed by fifty-three farm wagons round about it.

Spring was, naturally, the favourite. He brought down the scales at 13 stone 4 lb., whilst Langan was a stone under that amount, and was by some judges thought to have over-trained.

John Jackson, as was usual at all notable battles since his retirement, superintended all the arrangements in connection with the ring.

Spring was once again seconded by the old champion and Painter, Langan by Tom Belcher and O'Neil. Colours were tied to the posts in the men's respective corners: blue with white spots for Spring, black for Langan.

The fight began in very much the same way as the other between these men. Nothing of any particular note occurred until the seventh round, which was as good as any ever seen in the Prize-Ring. Spring led with his left and hit Langan hard in the face, stepping back at once. In those days they talked of Spring's "harlequin step," for he danced up to a man, hit or missed, as the case might be, and danced away again, extraordinarily light and easy upon his feet, and wonderfully quick. Now he was dancing in again, and hit Langan on the ear and nose. The Irishman came for more and was driven away with a stinging spank on the cheek-bone. His backers now called on him to exert himself, and he rushed at Spring, a great rally taking place, blow for blow, though Langan got the worst of it. Then they closed, and Spring threw his man heavily on the boards. Both were blowing when the round ended. It was "the Bank of England to a nutshell" on Spring, but Langan was a true Irishman. One of the differences between the English and the Irish is this: the Englishman doesn't know when he is beaten: the Irishman neither knows nor cares. With or without the chance of winning, Langan continued to fight.

By the eighteenth round Spring's left hand was quite useless. But his right hand was sound still and he used it with great effect. It was Spring's defence which made him one of the best knuckle-fighters that ever lived. He could guard and stop blows with

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greater dexterity and judgment than almost any other man, but he also understood the art of avoiding punishment by good footwork, which entails less effort. He was not a remarkably hard hitter, and, as we have seen, he suffered severely from his hands: but his skill lay in hitting again and again and yet again on precisely the same spot, so that the cumulative effect of many blows was as great, if not greater in a long fight, than that of a single smasher.

Certainly Langan succeeded, as he had in the previous affair, in throwing the champion and in hurling his own twelve stone violently on top of him, but as a boxer he was not, as they say, in the same street. There was no sort of question about his pluck. Not satisfied with the result of the previous battle, Jack Langan made his seconds promise on this occasion not on any account to give in for him or to interfere in any way. Indeed Tom Belcher more than once called on him to fight when he was past fighting.

The twenty-fourth round found them both exceedingly willing. Spring with slight marks on cheek and eye but otherwise undamaged by Langan. Both his hands, however, were very swollen now. The fight had already lasted fifty-two minutes, and Langan was much punished. But over and over again he tried his best to get past Spring's incomparable guard and failed. And now, the champion was getting by far the better of the falls too.

Once or twice during the later rounds there was a certain amount of bickering between the opposing seconds. Cribb, on one occasion, complained that Belcher was trying to gain time between the rounds: and once when Langan seized his opponent by the breeches to throw him a protest was made on that account, and the referee ordered Langan not to do it again.

The thirty-second round ended with a heavy fall for Langan, who struck his neck against one of the wooden rails which were used instead of ropes around the ring. A little later, in the thirty-sixth round, Langan's backer, Colonel O'Neill, asked that he should be taken away. But this he steadfastly refused, as did his seconds, who had given their solemn promise in that regard. Instead, Langan took a nip of brandy which helped him to

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recover momentarily: and battered and sorely spent as he was, he croaked out jestingly to his seconds to be sure and keep the brandy cold. He made one or two more attempts to force the fighting, but his antagonist was still quite strong, unhurt, and as alert to seize opportunities and avoid danger as in the first round.

At the beginning of the forty-seventh round Langan was brought up to the scratch by his seconds, which, though strictly speaking, against the rules then in force, was frequently winked at. It was a good rule, and should have been adhered to: because if a man could not come up to the scratch at the call of time he was certainly in no condition to continue fighting. After a time Langan's conduct went beyond the boundaries of pluck and became—what we should certainly call to-day—foolish obstinacy. "There was nothing to be gained by going on." And how often do we hear that remark to-day in all manner of diverse connections. But we should recognise a signal virtue in that (no doubt foolish) desire to go on where "nothing is to be gained." "Leave me alone, I *will* fight," Langan said, when his plight was so obviously hopeless that the crowd on all sides yelled for him to be taken away. And he went on until the seventy-seventh round. And for many rounds before the end Spring never hit at all, but gently pushed the brave fellow down. In the end he came tottering to the scratch and fell senseless without even the push.

This fight lasted for one hour and forty-eight minutes.

Both Spring and Langan retired after this and became fast friends. "Thormanby" tell us that every year on the anniversary of their first fight Langan used to send Tom Spring a keg of the very best Irish potheen. Spring told "Thormanby" this story in 1851, just before he died.

After his retirement the champion took the Castle Tavern in Holborn, Tom Belcher's lease of which had just expired, and he became widely known as a great landlord and sportsman.

"Thormanby" has another story to tell of Jack Langan's generosity. He settled at Liverpool when he retired and took an inn there; and when the Irish harvesters came over each year,

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Langan would put up as many of them as he could for a couple of days on their way inland. These men he fed and provided with plenty of beer and a nightcap of potheen—on the condition that before going to roost they left their sickles and shillelaghs in his care.

Towards the end of his life Tom Spring got into financial difficulties, owing to his trust in friends who used him as an agent in betting transactions, and then disappeared when the wrong horse got home or the wrong man gave in. He died at the early age of fifty-six, in 1851; Langan having predeceased him by five years.

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CHAPTER XIV

DEAF BURKE AND SIMON BYRNE

On the retirement of Tom Spring the championship fell to Jem Ward, who held it for many years. He was followed by Deaf Burke, whose fight with Simon Byrne is the subject of this chapter. This, as will be seen, was a disastrous fight, in that the unfortunate Byrne died immediately after it. It is, however, necessary to give some details of the circumstances, because Byrne's death was typical of the sort of accident that occasionally happened in connection with the Prize-Ring, and has since happened more than once in connection with modern boxing. I say "in connection," rather awkwardly like that because, as will be discovered presently, the fight in these cases is only the occasion and not the actual cause of mortal injury.

The battle in question was fought at No Man's Land, in Hertfordshire, for £100 a side on May 30th, 1833. Almost exactly three years before, Byrne had fought and beaten a man named McKay, who died next day. Byrne had been tried for manslaughter and acquitted. The circumstances of the death of both were somewhat similar: and there is no doubt that McKay's death preyed upon Byrne's mind.

In the first place we find that Simon Byrne was grossly out of condition before he went into training. He weighed 15 stone, and reduced himself to 13 stone 4 lb. "An effort which," *Bell's Life in London* tells us, "as it was effected by hard work and sweating, somewhat impaired his natural stamina, especially as, his habits being far from abstemious when in Ireland, he was scarcely fitted to undergo the necessary amount of labour." That is, no doubt, the explanation of the tragedy, as it has been the explanation of other tragedies, one of which is within comparatively

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recent memory. As a rule, the modern champion is a tee-totaller, and generally speaking "takes care of himself." He lives not merely a "reasonable life," but a life, physically speaking, devoted to one end. His health comes before everything else. It is, for better or for worse, a restrained, careful, hygienic age—anyhow for boxers with pretensions. But in the old days, the fighting men alternated between bouts of the wildest debauchery and the most violently severe training. No wonder they died young. No wonder that the sudden abstention from artificial stimulant combined with over-hard work and culminating in the prolonged strain and pain of a desperate battle occasionally killed them. The wonder is that there were not more deaths from a like cause.

Deaf Burke, on the other hand, was young and healthy, and in high spirits. He was seconded by Tom Gaynor and Dick Curtis, Byrne by Tom Spring and Jem Ward. On stripping, Burke was seen to be in perfect condition, but Byrne looked still a little too fleshy and had no special show of muscle upon him. He had a good deal of advantage in height. Burke was the favourite but not at greater odds than 5-4, or guineas to pounds.

In the days of bare knuckles there was generally a certain amount of "honour" to be gained by achieving the first knock-down, or drawing first blood. There was often betting on the subject, anyhow on the former event. In the first round of this match a good deal of amusement was caused by Burke. Byrne hit him on the nose and made him sniff. Whereupon Byrne called out, "First blood!" Burke deliberately wiped his nose with his finger and showed it to his opponent unstained. Then they went at it again, and before long the Irishman was seen to be bleeding at the mouth. But at the same moment Burke's nose did begin to bleed, so the umpires and the referee decided that it was a tie.

The second round found both the men in the best of good tempers, and the hitting was even. Towards the end of this set-to there was a fierce rally in which both gave heavy punishment. They closed, and Byrne threw Deaf Burke and fell upon

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him. Burke's defence was the sounder, but his antagonist was the better wrestler. In the fourth round Byrne swung his right with tremendous force at his man's head, and had the blow landed on the jaw it might well have finished the battle. But Burke moved forward at that moment and the blow caught him on the back of the head with much of its force spent, and no particular damage was done.

There was some good fighting in the next round. Each landed a hard left, and then Byrne stepped back, landing a splendidly timed upper-cut with his right as Burke came in. Then he closed and hurled the "Deaf 'un" down. Jem Ward derisively asked Burke from Byrne's corner "How did you like that?" and Burke grinned.

Byrne's hand was now beginning to swell from the effects of his tremendous punch in the fourth round. He again threw Burke, who appeared none the worse for it. He was hitting the oftener, Byrne the harder: but the Irishman's best blows did not get through the other man's defence. Both were badly marked, however, and before the fight had lasted three-quarters of an hour, had revived themselves with brandy.

By the eighteenth round they were getting slow. Burke had a primitive ruse which he employed from time to time of looking at his man's body and grimacing and then bringing up his fist to the head. He tried this now with eminent success. In the next round Byrne received a very hard blow under the ear, not by any means the first, which must have done him more harm than he knew at the moment. He fought back, however, and landed on Burke's nose and again on the eye, when Burke lowered his hands for a moment to wipe them on his breeches. "Loud laughter at Burke's expense," says the writer in *Bell's Life*.

The first knock-down was administered by Byrne in the twenty-seventh round. After that Byrne had distinctly the best of it for some time. He threw Burke with terrific force on his head in the twenty-ninth round and in the next hit him so severely about the body as to make him sick. Burke was evidently weak, and Byrne seemed to have the fight in his hand. He threw his

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opponent again and again, rushing him to the ropes and hitting him severely before closing.

The responsible officials ought now to have stopped the fight, there is no excuse for them whatever. What followed was sheer beastliness and nothing else. Burke and Byrne are in no wise to blame. Both fought until they were virtually senseless. Both tried to be, quite roughly speaking, fair.

In the forty-third round Tom Cannon, a well-known bruiser and a backer of Deaf Burke, broke, with others, into the ring and began to curse Burke. "Get up and fight, Deaf 'un," he shouted. "D'ye mean to make a cross of it?"

With some difficulty Cannon and the rest were expelled from the ring, and the fight, if fight it can be called, went on.

Both men were now nearly exhausted, but Deaf Burke, urged by his seconds, went in with all his remaining strength and punished Byrne severely. In the forty-ninth round the Irishman came to grass very weak, and Burke became favourite again. And so it went on till the ninety-ninth round, now one and now the other having some slight advantage. Once, his supporters seeing Burke down and apparently unconscious hailed Byrne as the winner: but at the call of time, Dick Curtis, his second, brought Burke up to the scratch, where he stood with indomitable pluck, ready to go on fighting. Byrne's chances had finally gone when both his hands became so "puffed" that he was unable to strike a single blow which could hurt his opponent, let alone knock him out.

Later on, the supporters of the men on either side, apart from their seconds, crowded round them and sprinkled water on them during the progress of the rounds, and fanned them with their hats. And the ring was the centre of pandemonium. The crowd yelled and yelled again for one or other, Burke or Byrne. What cared they that the men had long ago fought themselves to exhaustion, so long as the technical decision was obtained, the decision which would decide the bets?

And there are men now who complain that we are a softened race because we don't allow this sort of thing. . . .

Burke remained slightly the stronger. Latterly he seldom

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" hit " except with his open hand, but it was enough to send his antagonist down. And yet in the ninety-first round Byrne managed to trip him and fall on him, so that once again the Irishman's chances were favoured. Then Burke, answering the curses and the cheers, managed to knock Byrne down rather harder than usual. And that was the last change. After that Byrne was carried to the scratch virtually insensible, literally dazed. He could just stand unsupported long enough for Burke to put out his hand and topple him over. He made pitiful efforts to put out his left to stop the " Deaf 'un." But it was of no use. At last he fell unconscious on the grass, and Tom Spring and Ward with all their skill—sousing him with water, forcing brandy between his mutilated lips, biting his ears—could not bring him round. And half of the crowd deliriously cheered Deaf Burke as Champion of England.

Two days after this Simon Byrne died. The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of manslaughter against Burke, as " principal in the first degree," and the four seconds, together with the umpires and the referee, as " principals in the second degree."

These men were tried at the Hertford Assizes, and on the surgeon's evidence acquitted. The cause of death was the congestion of blood in the brain. The surgeon also gave the opinion that the intense disappointment of losing the fight lessened his chances of recovery. When he regained consciousness, Byrne believed that he would die; and this very fact, aided by his way of living " out of training," no doubt aggravated his condition.

This is probably true: but the umpires and the referee deserved the most abusive censure.

Before the trial the sum of £262 was collected for Byrne's widow: but when the trial was safely and satisfactorily over, one hundred guineas were subscribed in order to present a service of plate to the editor of *Bell's Life*, " as a token of the respect in which he was held, not only by the men who had recently undergone their trial, and whose defence he had conducted, but also for the manner in which he had invariably conducted the cause of fair play. . . ."

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CHAPTER XV

BENDIGO AND DEAF BURKE

It is not generally known that a Mr. William Thompson was once Champion of England. Sometimes a nickname will stick to a man much harder than the name of his father, and so it was with Thompson. He was one of a triplet, called, in and out of the family, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This last, "Thormanby" tells us, soon became "Bednego," of which "Bendigo,"—a much easier word to say—is the natural corruption. To start with, Thompson tried to maintain the full "Abednego," and advertised himself as a boxer under that *nom de guerre* in *Bell's Life*. Jem Belcher left his name to a particular sort of scarf. "Jack Johnson," a variety of heavy German shell, is at least as well-known as the negro champion, and thousands of people must know of Bendigo, a town in Australia, who never heard of Bendigo, the prize-fighter.

Bendigo was a Nottingham man, born in 1812, and his first battle took place in 1835. This was with Ben Caunt, with whom he fought in all three times. He was, as champion heavy-weights go, a middle-sized man, 5 feet 9¾ inches in height, and his weight was generally somewhere in the neighbourhood of twelve stone. He was an all-round athlete, a fair cricketer and an acrobat: he was also a most scientific boxer, plucky, and a terribly hard hitter: but his methods were foul. In his first fight with Caunt his dodge—to which he was ever faithful in after years—was to hit and then directly there were signs of possible retaliation to slip down, as plausibly as possible, to avoid punishment. Going down without a blow was a foul by the rules: but on the whole Bendigo was wonderfully lucky in his referees. Caunt lost his temper after a time, and dashing across the ring, hit Bendigo whilst still on his second's knees. That was a foul that no referee

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could by any conceivable possibility overlook, and Caunt was "deemed the loser."

Three years later they met again, and this time Caunt won on a foul. This Ben Caunt also came from Nottingham; a huge fellow of 6 feet 2½ inches, weighing well over 15 stone in condition, and much more than that out of it. He had enormous bat-like ears which stood out on his head as do the handles of a cup. In the second fight he showed himself an inferior boxer to Bendigo: but his size and strength enabled him, in a close, to seize his opponent and almost to squeeze the breath out of his body. So far as hitting went, Bendigo had the better of it, and towards the end of the fight, which lasted for seventy-five rounds, the betting on him was 3-1. In the last round, however, he fell without a blow. His supporters declared that he had slipped and that throughout he had been handicapped by not having his proper fighting shoes. Caunt's people, however, appealed to the referee, who gave it a foul, and Caunt was, therefore, declared the winner. There were many roughs about the ringside, mostly partisans of Bendigo, and Caunt had to be mounted on a horse and ride almost for his life to escape them.

Bendigo's next fight was with Deaf Burke, and it took place near Appleby in Warwickshire, on February 12th, 1839. Bendigo was in first-rate condition, whilst his opponent looked pale and flabby. A diverting incident marked the preliminary arrangements, for there appeared at the ringside a "not unlikely woman," as *Bell's Life* calls her, a friend of the "Deaf 'un," who shook hands with him over the ropes and remained in that position of vantage throughout the battle.

Bendigo fought right foot foremost and in a rather stooping position, whilst Burke's attitude was more orthodox but a little too square, judged by the standard of Belcher and Spring. The man who stands square to his antagonist offers a bigger target, and it has been reckoned from the beginning of the nineteenth century that "edgeways on" is the better mode.

The first round was a good one. Both fought carefully and hit hard. Bendigo's left was straight and true, and the exchange

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of blows was equal. They closed at the end and both went down together. The second set-to was much the same, though it was noticed that Burke breathed the more heavily. In the next round, however, Bendigo went ahead, hitting again and again without a return. Burke seemed to be almost paralysed, unable either to defend himself or to hit back. His left eye was closed and at the end of the round, when Bendigo threw and fell on him, he was evidently feeling ill. He was much marked, whilst Bendigo was quite fresh and with hardly a flush to show that he had been hit. The fourth round was similarly Bendigo's. Burke fought with dogged pluck, but was clearly out of condition. His seconds shouted to him to go in and fight, and he did his best, but his opponent's straight and well-judged blows came and returned to the same bad eye and battered nose. Finally Bendigo stepped back rather too quickly, tripped against the lower rope, and fell out of the ring.

Ill-trained men can often fight with pluck, and Burke did this now, but his self-confidence had gone. He hesitated about leading, and whilst making up his mind Bendigo hit him and closed. A little later Burke took a nip from the brandy bottle, but this did him no good. In the seventh round he began by fighting hard, hitting left and right, but was finally thrown. He now accused his man of butting him, and anxiously appealed to the umpire, but no question of foul play had arisen. Bendigo had jerked his head back as he flung Burke down, and had not, as a fact, touched him. Burke was thrown in the eighth round and knocked down in the ninth. The tenth round was the last. Burke was now desperate. He rushed in, got close to his man, and hit with both hands, but he got more in return than he gave. Again he charged at his opponent, forcing him to the ropes, and whilst pinned with his back against them Burke deliberately butted Bendigo with his head. Jem Ward, who was seconding the victim, claimed a foul, which was allowed. Deaf Burke's umpire could not deny the justice of the decision; so Bendigo was proclaimed the winner after twenty-four minutes' fighting. There seems to be no doubt that Burke butted openly with this very end in view of being disqualified, so that an end could be made of a battle for which he had lost all taste.

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CHAPTER XVI

YANKEE SULLIVAN AND HAMMER LANE

In one respect the most remarkable fight in the whole history of the Prize-Ring was an unimportant affair, so far as title or money goes, between Jack Lane, commonly known as "Hammer," and Yankee Sullivan, an East-End Londoner born of Irish parents who had emigrated to America. Lane in training weighed 10 stone 10 lb. He was twenty-six years of age, and hitherto his most considerable battles had been with Owen Swift, whom he beat; and a black man who had taken the celebrated name of Molyneux, and who had beaten him. Sullivan was quite unknown in England. He fought at 11 stone 6 lb., and had stipulated that Lane should not exceed 11 stone. The match was for £50 a side, and took place at Crookham Common, on February 2nd, 1841.

Both the men were in perfect condition. Lane was confident and smiling, Sullivan fiercely serious, as befitted a stranger with his career before him. Very little time was wasted in manœuvring. They came to the scratch, and Sullivan led immediately with his left. Lane guarded the blow and sent in left and right in quick succession, both being stopped. They were boxing well and cleanly, and there was not a penny to choose between them. The ground had been covered with snow which had been perfunctorily swept from the ring itself, but a thaw had set in and the grass was very wet. The first round ended by Lane slipping down.

In the next round Sullivan was in less of a hurry to begin, and waited to see what his opponent would do, and, when Lane hit, stopped him. They met in a rally and exchanged blows equally and Lane slipped down again.

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The third round began with a couple of hard lefts from either side, one on Lane's mouth and the other catching Sullivan under the eye. They fought for a minute or so, but Sullivan's blows were very poor, for he hit with his open hand. Then Lane dashed in and threw his arms round his antagonist and fell, his right arm striking the ground under Sullivan's head. He at once felt a considerable shock. Something had happened, but he didn't dare say even to himself, let alone his seconds, what it was. He went casually to his corner. Both men were now considerably marked. Lane hit out with his left with less confidence than in the last round, and Sullivan stopped the blow, countering quickly on the mouth. In a rally it was noticed that Lane was guarding as well as hitting with his left, and he did it with remarkable precision. Sullivan aimed a tremendous upper-cut, and Lane jumped back from it, slipping down again as he did so, but rising again at once and going to his corner laughing.

The fifth round was short and equal. At the end Lane closed and threw his man.

He came up laughing for the sixth and hit out vigorously. It was going to be all right, he said to himself. No one had seen anything odd yet, and he felt that he was Sullivan's master. He feinted with his left and sent in a very light right on his man's nose and then quickly sent out the left again. Then Sullivan set his teeth and forced Lane to a corner, and a hard rally began in which Lane hit with both hands. He tried a harder right this time and Sullivan stopped the blow with the point of his elbow. Then at last Lane winced and gave ground. The pain had not been so bad hitherto, but the impact of his antagonist's sharp elbow on his forearm was agonising. But he was not going to show that he was hurt before he must. He went in again and plugged away at the body with the left. But his right hand dropped to his side, and it was at last plain to the spectators that he had hurt it. But he went to the attack again and again with his left, until Sullivan grabbed hold of it, and closing, threw Lane and fell on him.

What had happened was a rare accident and would have caused

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nine out of ten men to give in at once and without disgrace. At the end of the third round, as said, Lane threw Sullivan and they came down together with great force, their combined weight falling on Lane's arm, which was beneath his opponent's head. That fractured the radius, or outer bone of the forearm. At first Lane felt a severe shock, and guessed what had happened, but the pain was not severe until in the sixth round he hit with his right. But when, hitting hard, the blow was stopped by Sullivan's elbow, the pain was exquisite, and his forearm, already swollen, became too painful to hold up. The spectators, and no doubt Sullivan as well, did not know how serious the accident was, but it was patent that Lane had suffered some injury, and Sullivan's friends cheered him on to take advantage of it. Now Lane reckoned to himself that he knew more boxing and could hit harder than his opponent, and that if he could only do it quick enough he could thrash him with one hand. So he went in and smashed Sullivan's face with his left, drawing blood. Blow after blow he sent home much too swiftly for Sullivan to stop, and his cheek and eyebrow were dreadfully cut. Again the American's supporters yelled to him to fight. "He's only got one arm. Go in—go in!" they shouted. And he accordingly went after Lane, who could only retreat, hitting as he went. Sullivan tried to close, and then Lane slipped down. His backers, seeing, as they imagined, nothing else for it, gathered in Lane's corner and declared that he must give in. Lane laughed the suggestion to scorn. He could beat Sullivan with one hand, he retorted, and utterly refused to throw up the sponge. At the call of time he was laughing again and went straight for his man. This time Sullivan was quicker to guard, and it was some little time before Lane succeeded in landing a blow. The American, to his undying shame, aimed a furious blow at the broken arm. Fortunately he missed, and Lane countered heavily on the body. Then, without moving his feet, he lifted his left twice to the face and hit with all his strength. Sullivan was nearly dazed, and, becoming flustered, missed his own blows, and Lane went down again.

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It should be said here that though there was plenty of excuse for his course of action, Lane did continually, after his accident, hit and go down to avoid punishment. The referee, who was Ned Painter, the pugilist, should have been much stricter. A rule is a rule, however much sympathy the breaker of it receives and deserves.

The ninth and tenth rounds found Lane hitting furiously and Sullivan almost maddened with pain. His supporters claimed a foul at the end of the latter round on account of Lane's going down to avoid a blow, but it was not then, or subsequently, allowed.

And so the fight went on, Lane hitting and hitting again with tremendous power, Sullivan getting much the worst of it, each round ending by Lane's slipping down directly he saw danger. The sympathy of the onlookers was naturally with the injured man, than whom a gamer never went into the ring.

In the fourteenth round Sullivan was getting wild, and Lane's heart was high with hope. He drew away, and the American came floundering at him, only to add his own weight to a dreadful straight blow on the eye which knocked him down.

In the sixteenth round Sullivan was almost blind of one eye, but Lane's hitting was now less accurate. The tremendous exertion of hitting with one hand, to say nothing of the pain in his useless right arm and the effort to protect it from further injury, was now telling on him. He missed one blow, and Sullivan, who had been given some oakum on his hands in order that they should remain shut, sent in a terrible right which knocked Lane down. In the next round Lane was hitting again, but got the worst of it. But his courage never faltered, and he came up with all the ardour of a well-trained and unhurt man beginning a battle. Again Sullivan landed heavily and knocked him down. Lane was now bleeding severely from a cut on his eyebrow. And then quite suddenly he weakened. He was looking white and worn out when he came up for the nineteenth round. He hit with a certain amount of vigour still, but could not stop the counter, and Sullivan, hitting him once more on the cut on his brow,

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knocked him down again. At that, since, though much damaged, Sullivan was evidently strong still and quite steady on his legs, Lane's backers gave in on his behalf. This amazing fight had lasted for thirty-four minutes.

As with Jem Belcher, after his second fight with Tom Cribb, Hammer Lane's chief concern was for his friends and backers who had put their faith in him. After this he did not fight again until 1850, when he had grown stiff and slow, and though Tom Davis, his opponent on that occasion, took over an hour to beat him, he did so decisively.

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CHAPTER XVII

BENDIGO AND BEN CAUNT

After this battle with Deaf Burke, Bendigo was given a champion's belt by Jem Ward, and for a year he remained undisputed Champion of England. In March of 1840, however, whilst skylarking and turning somersaults at some military steeplechases at Nottingham, he slipped his knee-cap and was told by his doctor that he would never be able to run or fight again. For two years he had to remain in retirement. During this time Burke tried to assert himself as champion, but was beaten by Nick Ward, and shortly afterwards died of consumption. Ward won on a foul from Ben Caunt, who, however, came back on him and thrashed him in forty-seven minutes. Then Bendigo, who had taken the utmost care of his injured knee, considered himself strong enough to win the championship back.

But first of all he came from Nottingham to London and practised with the gloves for a time. He then challenged Tass Parker for £200 a side. A match was arranged, but on the eve of it Bendigo was arrested and clapped into jail, and the forfeit money was paid to Parker. The evidence with regard to this arrest is somewhat conflicting. There is no doubt at all but that it was made at the instance of Bendigo's elder brother, John Thompson: the reason generally given being that he was afraid lest Bendigo should injure his knee again. "Thormanby," however, assures us that John's motive was his abhorrence of the Ring. The Thompsons were a family of quite marked respectability: one of their uncles had been a dissenting minister. . . . Brother John was a well-to-do manufacturer, of the most unctuous rectitude, and there were two great troubles in his comfortable life. One was his prize-fighting and disreputable brother William

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and the second, sad to tell, was his mother. Mrs. Thompson was not at all the sort of person that you would anticipate in such a family. How she came to be the mother of John (and of other respectable children) passes comprehension. And Bendigo loved her dearly, and she was intensely proud of him. But she was so "coarse," so violent—a big, jolly, generous creature. On the days when he was fighting Ben Caunt she would sit in her kitchen and listen to the clock ticking, and she would declare that it always ticked "Ben-dy Ben-dy." "By Gosh," she said, "if it'd ticked 'Ben Caunt,' I'd have oop and smashed its blasted face for it." And we can see her, sitting there, comfortable, with her hair loose and untidy, her face red, big-mouthed, gap-toothed, with dark, small eyes, immoderately buxom—a jewel of a woman.

After some negotiation (which in the 'forties of last century were almost as long drawn out and as exasperating as the corresponding negotiations of to-day) a third battle between Bendigo and Ben Caunt was finally arranged for £200 a side and the belt. This encounter was fought out, after principals and expectant onlookers had been hounded by the police from two different places, at Sutfield Green in Oxfordshire.

Now this battle with Ben Caunt has been branded as the most disgraceful affair in all the annals of the Ring, but it is representative of its period, and as such must be described.

Bendigo had been trained at Crosby, near Liverpool; Caunt at Hatfield, to which place Tom Spring used constantly to come from London to see how the big fellow was getting on. Caunt was now thirty-three, and before he began training he weighed 18 stone. During that very arduous process he reduced himself to 14 stone, without actually injuring himself. Bendigo was three years older and only 12 stone 1 lb. Both men entered the ring in fine condition. There were about 10,000 spectators with a remarkably strong leaven of roughs from Nottingham. These gentry came armed with bludgeons and yelled for Bendigo. The betting immediately before the fight was chiefly in the proportion of 6-4 on Ben Caunt.

The men came with their seconds to the scratch and, following

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the old custom, all four crossed hands in the middle of the ring, the seconds presently retiring to their corners, leaving the antagonists facing one another. Caunt had won the toss for corners, and had his back to the sun. There was a good deal of difficulty about the choice of a referee, and at last much against his own personal inclination, Mr. Osbaldiston—"The Old Squire," as he was everywhere called—consented to act. Bendigo walked a little lame, but his activity in the ring was not much impaired. Right foot foremost, he crouched with his left shoulder held high in an exceedingly awkward and ungainly position: but his jaw was thus well protected from Caunt's mighty right. The giant, on the other hand, stood nearly square with both arms well out in the manner of Bill Neate. Bendigo, as befitted the smaller man, circled round, looking for an opening and biding his time. Caunt pivoted about slowly in order to face him. Each time he went round Bendigo got nearer and nearer to his man by imperceptible stages. Then at last Caunt let go, and Bendigo, who had deliberately drawn the blow, ducked it and sent in a heavy counter to his opponent's eye. For an instant the big man's face expressed rage and ferocity, and then he grinned. There was always something about Bendigo which made folk laugh. He was ever a merry-andrew, always playing the goat; you couldn't help but grin even when he hurt you. And then in the next minute he had hit again, this time with a tremendous left which reopened an old scar, and Caunt bled profusely. He lumbered in, trying to land a blow on the smaller man: but Bendigo ducked and dodged and sidestepped and avoided them all.

In the third round Caunt managed to catch hold of his opponent and threw him. But although his training had not exactly hurt him, his strength was not at its greatest, and Bendigo's speed quite overwhelmed him. He hit him as he liked, smashed his face with left and right, and would get away without a reply: then lest the reply turned out to be belated but sure, Bendigo would slip down.

Once Caunt caught him up against the ropes and leaned on him there, and would most likely have hurt him seriously, but

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that he overbalanced himself and fell down. Bendigo's hitting was really terrific. Caunt was much cut about the face from the earliest rounds, but in the thirteenth round Bendigo sent in a left which is famous in the history of boxing. It struck Caunt on the right cheek with such force as to knock him clean off his legs, actually lifting his fourteen stone in the air. For a few seconds he was quite stunned. A little later Bendigo split his man's upper lip clean through, and the blood poured from it. Caunt was tremendously game, and though utterly beaten, hit for hit, stood up and fought. Bendigo was never a cur whenever he did suffer punishment, but his artful dodge of avoiding it by continually going down was detestable and ought to have been stopped at once. And towards the end of this fight, which lasted for ninety-three rounds and over two hours, Caunt was getting the better of it. Bendigo continued to drop directly he saw danger. Caunt's supporters again and again appealed to the referee, but in the yelling and confusion about the ring they were either unheard or unheeded. Moreover, the proper way to appeal —according to the rules—was first to the two umpires, who in their turn referred to the higher authority. Backers and seconds frequently forgot this, and referees occasionally took advantage of the fact.

The roughs who had come to support Bendigo were known as the " Nottingham lambs," and they were indeed a pretty crew. Time and again they tried to cut the ropes when Caunt had forced Bendigo against them, and one blackguard aimed a blow with his bludgeon at Caunt's head, missed, and caught Tom Spring, who was by the ropes at the moment, on the shoulder. To the last the big man hoped by getting in one frightful smasher to end the fight, but towards the last they were both using foul methods, Bendigo hitting below the belt, Caunt trying to use his knee. In the ninety-third round Caunt knocked Bendigo down—so *Bell's Life* tell us—and turned away, naturally supposing that the round was over. Bendigo leapt to his feet, however, and dashed after his man, hoping to be able to hit him at a disadvantage before he could turn. As his arm was poised to deliver the blow Caunt

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JACK RANDALL

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abruptly sat down. An appeal was at once made by Bendigo's seconds, Ward and Hannan, together with others, direct to the referee, who decided that Caunt had deliberately gone down without a blow, and that Bendigo was the winner. It must be remembered that when Bendigo went down as he did, over and over again, it was in a less obvious manner; that is to say, at the end of a sharp rally when he was close to his man. His position in this way would be more equivocal than Caunt's.

Reviewing the evidence, it certainly does seem that the referee made an error of judgment. Having made it, he stuck to it, as he should. He was, of course, accused of being intimidated by the ruffians whose heavy sticks were close about his head. The facts of the case were presented to "The Old Squire" afterwards, especially Caunt's quite natural supposition that the round had ended. The referee replied that he had given his decision to the best of his ability from what he saw. His view of the proceedings was constantly being interrupted, and it was quite possible that he did not see everything. He pointed out, further, that against his wishes he had been chosen as referee by both the parties.

It is perfectly useless to make any comment other than that the referee should certainly have been stricter in the earlier stages of the fight. On this occasion the principals themselves, especially the winner, were not blameless: but the chief fault, of course, lay with the person or persons who organised the band of ruffians from Nottingham. These men had no silly idea of putting money on the chances of Bendigo and backing their sanguine opinion. They intended to subscribe a certainty.

Caunt and Bendigo were bitter enemies for a long time after this, but in 1850, they had a great joint Benefit, at which they at last shook hands and became fast friends.

Bendigo was a bit of rapscallion, certainly; but he was a born clown, with the keenest sense of fun, which lasted almost to his dying day. His acrobatic feats even when he was an old man were the astonishment of his contemporaries and the delight of children. He was, as you might say, a funny mixture: a great gardener, a patient fisherman, in bouts a drinker who, with

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very little liquor in him, went clean off his weak head, and once cleared a butcher's shop in his drunken rage, hurling legs of mutton at the jeering crowd upon the pavement. At the considerable risk of his own he saved a man's life from drowning in the Trent, and indignantly refused a material reward. In 1870, some revivalists seeing the peculiar possibilities of this brand if he could only be snatched from the burning, "converted" him; and "Thormanby" tells the story of how Lord Longford, his old backer, once meeting him in a London street dressed in a black coat and a white tie, stopped him and asked, "Hallo, Bendy! What's *your* little game now?"

"Truly, my lord," Bendigo answered with an impeccable unction, "I am fighting Satan now, and Scripture saith that victory shall be mine."

"Hope so, Bendy," said his lordship, "but if you don't fight Beelzebub more fairly than you did Ben Caunt, I'll change sides."

Like other converts Bendigo occasionally fell from grace: but the family bias towards evangelical assiduity swung him periodically towards uprightness till his death in 1880.

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CHAPTER XVIII

NAT LANGHAM AND TOM SAYERS

TOM SAYERS was the last of the great champions of England under the old dispensation. And, as champions go, he was a little man, standing 5 feet 8 inches and usually weighing about 11 stone. He was born at Brighton in 1826, and as a lad was apprenticed to a bricklayer there. At the age of twenty-two he came to London to work on the London and North-Western Railway. He was known from a lad as being fairly handy with the gloves, and in more than one pot-house brawl he had shown more than that he could take care of himself. In all his fights, with one exception, he gave away weight. His first battle was in 1849, with Abe Crouch, who was two stone the heavier and whom Sayers decisively thrashed. He fought for two and a half hours with Jack Grant of Southwark, and just beat him after an extraordinary display of pluck.

Sayers's only defeat was at the hands of Nat Langham, in October of 1853. And this beating was certainly due to overconfidence, not during, but before the fight. The men were nearly equal in weight and Langham was six years older. As he had been used to giving other opponents as many stone as he was giving Langham pounds, he took very little trouble with his training, and entered the ring somewhat soft. Langham, on the other hand, had got into excellent condition in the hands of Ben Caunt.

Bell's Life tells us quite frankly in its issue just before this battle that the "Blues" were to be outwitted, that the rendezvous for the combat was being kept a strict secret, but that information as to the place and time could be obtained at Ben Caunt's or Alec Keene's. In the event a train left Bishopsgate Street Station for

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an unknown destination, when, while the day was still young, a ring was formed and the men set to.

For once in a way youth was not served. As soon as he stripped it was seen that Sayers was flabby and fat about both body and face, and as time went, not only was his wind affected, but his eyes swelled much more easily than if he had been in hard condition. Langham had the advantage in height and reach, and he was a better boxer than Sayers in those days. The first round ended in a knock-down to Sayers, but the ground was slippery and Langham was none the worse. A few rounds later Langham improved, using the blow that was known as his "pick-axe," a chopping left designed to blind his opponents by hitting them just below the eyes in such a way that they swelled and blinded them. Also he began in the fifth round to put in many straight blows over his man's guard. Sayers grinned good-humouredly, though his face was covered with blood. In the next round he flung himself at Langham and hit him thrice on the jaw, finally sending him down hard. But how he regretted the slackness of his training! Throughout the seventh and eighth rounds Sayers followed up his advantage and gave his antagonist a terrible time. How long would he be able to last at this pace? He knew that Langham was said to be delicate, but he was thoroughly game. Had Sayers been in perfect training now he could have won, and won quickly—he was sure of it. As it was his wind was already touched, and the prolonged effort of attack gave him a sickish feeling which was worse than his opponent's hardest blows.

Langham saw how it was with Tom Sayers, and, smiling to himself, he went for him, leading with his left again and again on the mouth and eyes. The tenth round was overwhelmingly in Langham's favour. In the twelfth both were winded and for several rounds they took things easy. In the twenty-first Sayers in a close threw his man and fell on him, and he kept up a general improvement. He said to himself that he would win yet, Langham was getting weak. But he must hurry. His own blows seemed wretchedly poor—seemed, but were not. He

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was still hitting hard. A spent boxer often believes that his blows are mere taps when they are really powerful. The betting had risen in Sayers's favour again—5-4. By the twenty-eighth round an hour had gone by, and both men, though weary, seemed to have settled down to a jog-trot method of fighting which, with what is known as a "second wind," seems to last almost indefinitely.

Nat Langham had a beautiful straight left, only equalled by Sayers a few years later, when the little man was at his best, and he made full use of it now, plugging his man in the eye whenever he came near, and thus keeping him from getting too near. By the thirty-second round Sayers's left eye was nearly closed, by the forty-seventh he was almost blind of the right eye too. The rounds were short and he was getting much the worst of it now. With splendid gameness he kept on leading, but Langham propped him off and countered on every occasion. At about this point in the battle, Sayers's seconds had recourse to a desperate remedy to prevent their man from becoming totally blind, and they lanced the swellings beneath each of his eyes. This caused only temporary relief, and Sayers, of course, lost a lot of blood when Langham hit him on the wounded places again. Between the fiftieth and sixtieth rounds all hope for Sayers had gone. His eyes were so swollen that he could hardly see at all. And yet, despite his lack of training, he was now stronger than Langham, and the fight resolved itself into a race with blindness. The sixty-first round was the last. Sayers was now very groggy, and practically sightless. His hits were wasted on the air. His friends called out to have him taken away. Finally Nat Langham with a weak left and right completely closed Sayers's eyes and knocked him down. Thereupon Alec Keene threw up the sponge from Tom's corner. The fight, which was Langham's last, had occupied two hours and two minutes.

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CHAPTER XIX

TOM SAYERS AND THE TIPTON SLASHER

UNEQUAL fights always engage both our sympathy and our interest, and Tom Sayers was hardly ever matched with a man of anything at all near his own height and weight. William Perry, commonly called the Tipton Slasher, from the place of his birth in the Black Country, was Champion of England. He had fought ten big battles and had beaten good men, including Tass Parker twice. He had held the championship for four years when Sayers challenged him.

It was looked upon as an absurd match. Sayers was a lightish middleweight of 5 feet 8 inches. The Slasher now weighed about 14 stone and stood over 6 feet. He laughed at Sayers's challenge. He was utterly confident, knowing that he was bigger, stronger, and heavier, and believing that he was the better boxer. Nevertheless, Sayers found backing, and on June 16th, 1857, they fought for £200 a side and the belt.

These were the days when it was not sufficient in the interests of sport merely to pitch a ring on the boundary of two, or possibly three, counties, so that while the magistrates of one county might interfere, the principals and their followers had only to slip over the border into the next. In the fifties, and earlier, the law was much more stringently enforced, and vast expeditions used to leave London by special train to destinations unknown. In the present instance, an enormous crowd packed the train at Fenchurch Street Station. Tom Sayers was on it, but disguised, in case the police, who knew perfectly who the combatants were, searched the train. William Perry was picked up at Tilbury on the journey eastwards. At Southend the crowd left the train and embarked on a steamer which proceeded to mid-channel, and then altering

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her course, put down her freight of sportsmen, fighters, and ruffians at the Isle of Grain. Two more steamers now arrived, and a ring was made, out of sight of the river, in a field beneath a dyke. The first stake had hardly been driven in, when the police appeared —in what to us, now, would seem the picturesque costume of blue coats, white trousers, and glazed toppers. The crowd of 3000 men rapidly re-embarked in the waiting steamers, and the two boxers, hidden like leaves in a forest, escaped. They crossed the river, and, disembarking once more on the Kentish coast, were so lucky as to find a sporting farmer who gladly let the officials have the use of one of his fields in return for a place at the ring-side, which was joyfully awarded him. Here, behind the farm buildings, which hid the proceedings from passing ships, the ring was once more pegged out: the colours were tied to the stakes, blue with large white spots for Sayers, blue birds' eye for the Slasher. The two men were each seconded by old opponents who had become friends; Nat Langham and Bill Hayes in Sayers's corner, Tass Parker and Jack Macdonald in Perry's.

People said that there had been nothing like this since the days of Johnson and Perrins. For the Tipton Slasher was a magnificent giant, with the enormous shoulder-blades which stand for hard hitting, though a slight deformity in one leg had given him the nickname of "Old K Legs." But there was not an ounce of tallow on him. He was thirty-eight years of age, and looked more, for all his front upper teeth had been knocked out and his face was covered with the scars of old wounds. Little Tom Sayers was neatly built, clean-limbed, and in superb condition, but every one present when they saw the two standing up, facing one another, wondered how, with his comparatively short reach, he was going to hit the Slasher at all.

There are two ways of beginning a fight, and Perry chose the wrong one. Directly they had shaken hands and their seconds had retired to their respective corners he lunged out, aiming a tremendous hit and wasted it on the air. Not once nor twice did he misjudge his distance and throw away his strength in this manner, while Sayers nimbly jumped aside, or back, leading him

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round the ring. The Slasher was furious. "Coom and fight me," he said. "Don't 'ee go skirling about like a bloody dancing master." And Tom laughed at him. He knew perfectly well what he was about. He would make the giant tire himself out and then he would hit him at his own leisure. The Slasher, on the other hand, believed that one hit from him—one really good hit such as he alone could deliver—would finish his little opponent, and he tried again and again to put in such a blow. At first Tom Sayers was content to avoid them and leave well alone, but after a while he saw a perfect opening as he slipped his man's ponderous left, and he sent his own left in, straight, with all his might. It landed on the Slasher's nose and he snorted and gasped. That was a wonderful punch for so small a man. He began to feel a little uncomfortable. He couldn't be *beaten*, surely, by this monkey of a fellow. Still, it was disconcerting. And the more uncertain he became the wilder he grew. He was soon puffing and blowing from his frantic exertions to land just that one beauty which should knock Sayers out of time.

Then quite suddenly Tom Sayers reached the point when he could resist fighting no longer. It was all very well dodging and jumping out of harm's way and putting in an occasional counter-hit: and it was the right way to tackle a giant like William Perry. But Sayers was a fighter and he loved to "mix it." And so he restrained himself less and instead of running away he stood up to the Slasher. Tom ducked from the next mighty blow which swished through the air over his head, and again he ducked and this time the Tipton Slasher followed up one failure with several, and sent blow after blow into thin air. There came a chuckle of delight from behind him, and swinging round he saw Sayers dancing about and laughing at him. The big man looked extremely foolish. His seconds now roundly swore at him for wasting his strength, and told him that he ought to wait. But Perrins was angry and he went on beating the air. After a while, however, he did manage to land a good blow, which caught Sayers on the forehead and knocked him down flat. The onlookers gasped, for they thought that such a blow would kill the

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little man. But when time was called up he came still grinning and none the worse save for a bump like an egg. Now the Slasher was much happier. Two or three more like that and the fight would be over. But Sayers knew every trick of his trade, though he never descended to the dirty ones. He pretended now to be really frightened, and instead of slipping and laughing, he kept running away round the ring. But he was ready all the time and perfectly cool. He kept his right foot behind his left and never crossed his feet. Lumbering after him and playing the game he wanted him to play, came the Tipton Slasher. Then to save his breath Perry at length pulled up. Instantly, Sayers stopped also and plugged him in the face.

In the ninth round the Slasher came up to the scratch slowly. His seconds had done their best for him, but his strength was going. It is very exhausting to dash about a grassy ring and hurl ponderous blows at nothing. Once more he tried, but he couldn't get near Sayers. But now he was too tired to keep running after his opponent, and Sayers stood his ground. The next time the mighty fist shot out he ducked under it again and sent in a smashing blow on the Slasher's face. In that round he put in at least three perfect hits with every ounce of his weight behind them. At the third the Tipton Slasher staggered, and fell over. It was not a severe knock-down because the big man was badly balanced at the moment, but the spectators could see that he was beaten all the same. Then Sayers hit him as he liked, left and right: no dancing or running away now. The Slasher's seconds begged him to give in. They saw that it was hopeless, but this he refused to do. He would fight as long as he could see and stand. It is terribly humiliating to be thrashed by a man half your size, but William Perry was brave, and he faced that fact as well as the more pressing one. For he was dreadfully cut about. His seconds carried out all the usual receipts for bringing their man to the scratch again, biting his ears and sluicing him with cold water. The onlookers called out to have the Slasher taken away, but he would not be taken away. Tom Sayers stood in the mid-ring with his arms folded, waiting

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for his antagonist. He did not in the least want to hurt him, but what was he to do? At last Owen Swift, who was prominent amongst the Slasher's supporters, got through the ropes into the ring and held up his hand. The sponge was then thrown up from the Slasher's corner, and Tom Sayers was proclaimed Champion of England.

The battle had lasted for an hour and forty-two minutes. The Slasher wept bitterly when Sayers came over to shake hands. He had staked every penny he had on the fight, and was, besides being beaten, utterly ruined. "Something" was done for him afterwards, so that he was able to take the inevitable inn and spent the rest of his days in comparative comfort. He answered the final call of "Time" in January, 1881.

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CHAPTER XX

The Last Great Prize-Fight

TOM SAYERS AND THE BENICIA BOY

The fight between Tom Sayers, Champion of England, and Heenan, the giant American, was about the last conspicuous affair with bare knuckles fit for place in any history of the Prize-Ring. There were, no doubt, good bye-battles, but there is no record of them as such. From first to last, in the oldest days of all, just as to-day, we look to championship contests for representative form—and seldom find it. One or both of the champions may be as good men as it is possible to find, but the show that they put up when pitted against each other is frequently poor when compared to the performance of a couple of "unknowns." But this battle, viewed from various angles, was a good one.

Tom Sayers, Champion of England, was challenged by the American, Heenan, who came over with a bevy of supporters. The fight was arranged to take place on Tuesday, April 17th, 1860; but the utmost secrecy had to be preserved in order to avoid the police.

The following paragraph appeared in *The Times* for April 2nd (This was before the days of sensational and prominent headlines, and the reader had to search for the news which interested him):—

> "*The Forthcoming Prize-Fight.*—Hertford, Saturday. This afternoon Colonel Archibald Robertson, chief constable of the Hertfordshire Police Force, made application to the justices assembled in petty session at Hertford for a warrant to apprehend Thomas Sayers, the 'Champion of England,'

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and John Heenan, the American pugilist, in order that they might be bound over to keep the peace. . . ."

The gallant colonel failed to apprehend the delinquents, and at 4 a.m. on the great day an enormous special train steamed, under sealed orders, as it were, out of London Bridge Station, carrying about a thousand people, which number was more than trebled on the field of battle. This was at Farnborough, near Aldershot. The actual meadow was cunningly chosen, for it was practically surrounded by double hedges and ditches, and was a difficult place to come at in a hurry: the idea in the minds of the organisers being that if any body of men did try to interfere, due notice would be given of the fact to the principals and officials.

The fight began at 7.25 in the morning. A twenty-four foot ring was formed. The men shook hands, and tossed for corners. Heenan winning and naturally choosing the slight advantage of the higher side in a gently sloping space and a position which put the sun in his antagonist's eyes. The American was the first to strip, and was seen to be an enormous fellow, 6 feet 2 inches in height, with very long arms, a fine deep chest, and perfectly trained. He combined with these magnificent proportions much grace and freedom of movement. Sayers had a good look at his man, nodded his head quietly, and then stripped himself. He was only 5 feet 8 inches. His chest was not specially broad or thick, nor did his arms give the appearance of unusual development. Only his shoulders suggested where his wonderful hitting power came from. But he was a hard little man, and he, too, was in perfect condition. On the face of it, and to those spectators who were unacquainted with Sayers's previous performances or the history of the Ring (with its records of Tom Johnson and Jem Belcher), it appeared once again to be an absurd match. Heenan towered over his man and seemed to be about twice his size in every dimension.

They took up their positions, and laughed at each other as they moved round, each man to his right in order to avoid the other's right hand. Then Heenan led and just reached Sayers's

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mouth, getting a hard reply which, amidst loud applause, drew first blood. They sparred for a little longer and then closed, when Sayers, as they used to say in these days, " got down easily." A man was not allowed by the rules to go down without a blow, except in a close, in order to avoid punishment.

Their seconds sponged them down, gave them water to rinse their mouths with, and they came up again. This time they were quicker to work. Sayers looked at his huge adversary with perfect confidence in himself, and the coolness of long experience and a great capacity. Mere size troubled him not at all. He had fought and beaten big men before. Heenan led and led again and then a third time, but on each occasion Sayers threw back his head, and all three blows fell lightly. Then the big man got closer and sent home one on the mouth which made the English champion reel. But he returned at once to receive a whack on the forehead which knocked him down in his own corner. This, the first knock-down, did not trouble him in the least, though the Americans at the ring-side naturally shouted their delight.

After the half-minute Sayers came up quite fresh, though he had a big lump coming up on his forehead and his mouth was swollen. His footwork was brilliant. He nipped in and out, avoiding the long arms and always, when a blow did land, managed to be on the retreat, so that its force was lessened. But the sun shining in his eyes was a trouble, and he frowned and tried to work Heenan round so that he had his share of it. Heenan, however, grinned, and held his ground. Then Tom Sayers darted in to plant a hard body-blow, but caught a severe right which knocked him down. Once more Sayers tried to get out of the sun, and failing, closed and slipped down.

By this time he was a good deal marked, and there was a severe cut over his eyebrow. Both remained excessively cautious, and all at once the humour of it seized them and they put down their hands and roared with laughter, again—small wonder it is that foreigners used to think us a race of madmen, until—that is—the French began to play the same game. (Only for the most part, the French take boxing very, very seriously.)

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Suddenly Heenan steadied himself and shot out a straight left which fairly caught the champion and, for the fourth time, knocked him down. A large number of the spectators believed that Sayers was a beaten man. For a large number of them had not seen him fight before, and had no idea how much he could take. More experienced ring-goers watched, patiently suspending judgment. And presently the inexperienced folk were startled. Heenan sent out a smashing blow which Sayers entirely avoided, jumping right back from it, instantly bounding in again and delivering a terrific blow on his man's eye. It was one of those sliding, upward hits which almost split the American's cheek before it reached his brow, and it sent Heenan staggering away.

The rest did little to improve his appearance. He was bleeding profusely, swollen and disfigured. Sayers was getting comfortably set. He stopped a hard lead with his forearm, and dashing in, dealt out a harder one; and then another which seemed almost to crush Heenan's nose and very nearly lifted him off his legs. Five-foot eight and six-foot two. Not bad going.

In the seventh round, Sayers hit Heenan an awful blow which sent the blood spurting from his nose. Heenan grabbed hold of his man to put an end to this punishment, and Sayers got in some damaging body-blows before he fell underneath.

"As well as can be expected," thought Sayers to himself. Yes: he was doing very nicely, but he was not quite as happy as he looked. How long would it be before Heenan or his seconds spotted the truth. Hadn't they noticed yet that he was extremely shy of hitting with his right—had been shy for the last two rounds? And in his previous battles it was his right upon which he had depended for victory. One really good right-hander from Sayers was commonly reckoned to be enough for anybody. But he couldn't use his right now. He had tried and it was useless. That tremendous whack that he had stopped with his forearm had numbed it at the moment, and he had thought nothing of it until he tried to use it in offence. And then he knew that his right was out of action. He thought at the time that the bone was broken. As a matter of fact it was not,

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but a tendon was, which (for such intensely practical purposes) was just as bad. The arm was also one mass of inter-running bruises and fearfully swollen. So he held it across his chest in its orthodox position, and it was all he could do to keep it there: and he kept his face wooden and innocent and went on fighting with his left. The enemy shouldn't know before they must.

And round after round the little man came up smiling, relying on his feet for defence and his left for attack. Heenan also grinned. They were a good-humoured couple, as these couples of the Prize-Ring so often were. Once he landed a horribly severe smasher on Heenan which knocked him down, and instead of taking his rest for half a minute, he went prying into Heenan's corner to watch his seconds wiping away the blood. He might learn something in that way, he thought, which would be more valuable than thirty seconds on an another fellow's knee. Heenan, however, could take plenty of punishment, too, without complaining.

After this they fought a tremendous round which lasted nearly a quarter of an hour, and at the end were so exhausted that both of them had to be carried to their corners by their respective seconds. It had been foolish, Sayers now realised, not to take the rest he was entitled to. He must not play tricks like that again. He was greatly knocked about. His mouth and nose seemed as though they had been knocked into one, but his trick of throwing back his head as Heenan's huge fist caught him had done much to preserve his eyes.

Only once did he show a sign of anger. He drew back after a rally to spit out blood, and the American onlookers laughed. That stung him, and he dashed in again and gave Heenan a left which sent him reeling back, and another and another. A fourth hit made Heenan reel where he stood, so that with his right to follow up with Sayers might have knocked him out of time. As it was, he dared not come too close, for he feared being thrown upon his bad arm. But he shot out his left twice more, and one on Heenan's ribs sounded (so said *The Times* correspondent) "all over the meadow as if a box had been smashed in." Blows

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given with boxing gloves which sound loud and draw involuntary "Oh's!" from the spectators usually mean nothing at all. But sounding blows with a naked fist, particularly on the body, may mean a good deal.

Now Sayers could no longer raise his arm, and it hung limp at his side. Fortunately for him, Heenan was not an adept in the use of his own right. It was maddening to him to stand there and hit and hit again and to be able to make so little apparent impression on a man so much smaller and with but one arm in action. And Heenan was now a terrible sight. His face looked as though it were gashed with deep wounds, and indeed Sayers's sharp knuckles had lacerated the skin and the American was bleeding terribly. And then he managed to land a very hard left, which he shot in over Sayers's awkward left-handed guard, and the champion was knocked down. Then Heenan in the next round picked his man clean off his legs and threw him. And immediately afterwards they were both laughing at each other, neither in derision nor affectation. It was a rare fight, and good fun in its somewhat rough way, and worth laughing over. But one of the American's eyes was now completely closed. And he was getting hard put to it to see. But he knocked Sayers down once more.

Up and at it again. Sayers hit his opponent with tremendous force, and Heenan closed and then for the first and only time, forgetting his arm for the moment, Sayers exerted himself and threw the giant down. And he kept cool, watched his opportunities, and gave no chances. Nevertheless, the twenty-first and twenty-second rounds ended in his being knocked sprawling on the grass.

Heenan was fast going blind, and his backers yelled to him to keep Sayers in the sun and to throw him. With those shouts of encouragement in his ears he dashed at the champion and planted a tremendous body-blow which knocked him down and nearly beat the senses out of him.

It was at about this time that several of the police found their way through the crowd and began to come near the ring. But

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TOM SPRING.

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the huge crowd did their utmost to make that approach a difficult one. Sayers was getting weak, Heenan blind. It was really a race between the one failing and the other. Once when Sayers retreated fast round the ring with his man after him, Heenan managed to catch him and close and hit him when on the ground. Cries of "Foul!" went up, but the referee ruled that the blow was "struck in the heat of fighting" and was not to be regarded as a foul. That excuse would not "wash," as they say, nowadays.

Heenan's sight became worse, and once in his own corner he gave his own second a stinger in mistake for Sayers. In the thirty-ninth round he got Sayers's head under his left arm when in a corner. He was too weak to hit him severely whilst "in chancery," but leant upon the stake and held on to Sayers as though trying to strangle him. The champion could not move his head, try and pull and twist it as he would, but with a great effort he got his left free and from his awkward position planted a couple of blows. Heenan then twisted round so that Sayers's neck was tight against the upper rope, and he leaned hard on it. The Englishman gradually grew black in the face, and it was evident that he could not breathe. Both the umpires called out, "Cut the rope," and this was promptly done. By the rules they should have directed the seconds to separate the men, but no doubt they believed that this method was, in the circumstances, hardly quick enough. The police at this moment appeared at the broken ring-side, and the crowd surged in, leaving only as much room as the men could stand up in face to face. Each now knocked the other down, and then the police stopped the fight.

Heenan's sight was bad and he had to be led away by the hand; but both he and Sayers walked quite steady; Sayers declaring that he could have gone on for another hour.

The fight had lasted for two hours and twenty minutes and the result was declared a draw.

We are always brought up to believe that Sayers would have won without any sort of doubt at all if they had been allowed to go on for a few minutes longer. Naturally enough, that is the

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popular view, and the one promulgated (to quote a voice that, so to put it, is still heard) by William Makepeace Thackeray.

> "I think," he wrote in the *Cornhill*, "I think it is a most fortunate event for the brave Heenan . . . that the battle was a drawn one. The advantage was all on Mr. Sayers's side. . . . Now when the ropes were cut from that death-grip, and Sir Thomas released, the gentleman of Benicia was confessedly blind of one eye, and speedily afterwards was blind of both. Could Mr. Sayers have held out for three minutes, for five minutes, for ten minutes more? He says he could."

Thackeray is generally supposed to have been present at this fight and indeed was reported so by at least one newspaper. In this article in the *Cornhill*, he denies it, though in a somewhat involved fashion. His indignation in the matter was much more forcibly expressed in *Punch* for April 28th, 1860, to which he contributed (anonymously):—

THE FIGHT OF SAYERIUS AND HEENANUS

A LAY OF ANCIENT LONDON

(Supposed to be recounted to his great-grandchildren, April 17th, A.D. 1920, by an Ancient Gladiator)

> ". . . What know ye, race of milksops,
> Untaught of the P. R.
> What stopping, lunging, countering,
> Fibbing or rallying are?
> What boots to use the *lingo*,
> When you have not the *thing*?
> How paint to *you* the glories
> Of Belcher, Cribb, or Spring—

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To *you*, whose sire turns up his eyes
At mention of the Ring?
. . . . . .

Then each his hand stretched forth to grasp,
His foeman's fives in friendly clasp;
Each felt his balance trim and true—
Each up to square his mauleys threw;
Each tried his best to draw his man—
The feint, the dodge, the opening plan,
Till left and right Sayerius tried:
Heenanus's grin proclaimed him wide;
He shook his nut, a lead essayed,
Nor reached Sayerius's watchful head.
At length each left is sudden flung,
We heard the ponderous thud,
And from each tongue the news was wrung,
Sayerius hath "First Blood!"

Adown Heenanus's Roman nose
Freely the tell-tale claret flows,
While stern Sayerius's forehead shows
That in the interchange of blows
Heenanus's aim was good!
Again each iron mauley swung,
And loud the counter-betting rung,
Till breathless all, and wild with blows,
Fiercely they grappled for a close;
A moment in close hug they swing
Hither and thither round the ring,
Then from Heenanus's clinch of brass
Sayerius smiling slips to grass!

. . . in each succeeding round
Sayerius smiling came,
With head as cool and wind as sound,
As his first moment on the ground,

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Still confident and game.
How from Heenanus's sledge-like fist,
Striving a smasher to resist,
Sayerius's stout right arm gave way,
Yet the maimed hero still made play. . . .

Fain would I shroud the tale in night,—
The meddling Blues that thrust in sight,—
The Ring-Keepers o'erthrown;—
The broken ring—the cumbered fight,—
Heenanus's sudden, blinded flight,—
Sayerius pausing, as he might,
Just when ten minutes used aright
Had made the fight his own!

Alas! e'en in those brighter days
We still had Beaks and Blues,—
Still, canting rogues, their mud to fling
On self-defence and on the Ring,
And fistic arts abuse!
And 'twas such varmint had the power
The Champion's fight to stay,
And leave unsettled to this hour
The honours of the day! . . ."

Well, never mind about the canting rogues: we have seen Thackeray's opinion of the men's chances and the popular opinion. Let us now see what may be said on the other side.

A few days afterwards a correspondent, signing himself "Heavy-weight," wrote to the *Times* pointing out that Heenan's behaviour in the thirty-ninth round was fair by the Rules,[1] though the Rules were quite unnecessarily barbaric. He goes on to show that Heenan's partisans were in the proportion of one to every ten of Sayers's, and that the American had not been fairly treated.

[1] See Rule 28, Appendix.

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" If," he says, " the English party, the stronger, had been anxious that the fight should go on, I think the doctrine of probabilities leads us to suppose that it would have gone on; if the American party, the weaker, fearing their man would be beaten, had wished it to be stopped, I think the same doctrine points out to us that their wishes would not, in all probability, have been gratified."

And when we remember that the police first appeared on the outskirts of the crowd, just at a time when Sayers was getting a good deal the worst of it, and a very long time before they finally forced their way to the ring-side, and that they did so just at the moment when Sayers was under Heenan's arm, we are bound to admit the force of " Heavy-weight's " contention. It is quite possible that Sayers *would* have won the fight if it had been allowed to continue, but I don't fancy that his backers thought so.

It is interesting to know that after this battle the editor of *The Times* received many anonymous contributions to a testimonial for Sayers. The amounts received varied from a shilling's worth of stamps to notes for £25, and many of the subscribers wrote to say they had never seen a prize-fight, but desired to express their gratification at the splendid courage of the champion in defending the belt.

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PART II
GLOVES

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CHAPTER I

PETER JACKSON AND FRANK SLAVIN

It is appropriate to begin the second part of this book, which deals with Boxing in its modern sense, with an account of a fight described by all who saw it as the best ever seen. It took place thirty years ago, and things that happened thirty years ago are apt to be, superlatively, the best or the worst according to the point of the story. There seems to be no doubt, at all events, that the encounter between Frank Slavin and Peter Jackson was the best ever seen at the National Sporting Club.

Frank Slavin, as we have seen, was one of those boxers of the transition period who overlapped. He had fought both with bare knuckles and with gloves. Both he and Peter Jackson were Australians, and both claimed the championship of that country. The contest at the National Sporting Club was said to be for the World's Championship, but that is a phrase which on no occasion means very much. All that matters for our present purpose is that the match was an important one between two fine and evenly matched men.

Peter Jackson has been called the "first black Gentleman." He was born in the West Indies in 1861, and went as a lad to Australia, where, in Sydney, he was a fellow-pupil with Slavin of Larry Foley, who in turn had sat at the feet of Jem Mace. Indeed, in the past, Slavin had himself given Jackson lessons in boxing. The black had only once been beaten, and in 1891 he had fought a draw of sixty-one rounds with James J. Corbett. In those days an unlimited number of rounds—that is, a fight to a finish—had not been prohibited in all the states of the Union, and this remaining custom of the Prize-Ring was much abused. The battle took place at the California Athletic Club, at San

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Francisco, for a purse of 10,000 dollars. It was a poor affair. Jackson hit straight, Corbett crocked. But the white man was cleverer than the black at avoiding punishment by clinching at the psychological moment. Often he refused to break away until the hissing of the crowd became a positive menace. For the last fifteen rounds there was no boxing at all. The men were utterly exhausted: Corbett had hurt an arm, two of Jackson's ribs were broken. The referee at last declared the fight a draw. He might just as well have done so much earlier.

Every one who came in contact with him liked Peter Jackson for a quiet, well-behaved, sportsmanlike fellow without the slightest brag or bounce about him, which in their worst manifestations are so characteristic of his race. He was known for a first-rate boxer, and Mr. Eugene Corri, the well-known referee, declares that he was the best boxer he has ever seen. He stood 6 feet 2 inches and weighed 13 stone 10 lb. in perfect condition, against Slavin's 6 feet 1 inch and 13 stone 6 lb. There was only a year's difference in their ages: both men had been finely trained, though some, disappointed in the result, say that Slavin was a shade over-trained. He was a big-boned, square-jawed rock of a man, hairy and ferocious: while Jackson's skin shone like black marble.

The match took place on May 30th, 1892. The National Sporting Club had not been long founded, and its theatre was packed to its extremest limit. The contest was to be one of twenty three-minute rounds, and four-ounce gloves were used. Jackson's chief physical advantage was a slight superiority in reach, but it was known that Slavin's strength was prodigious, and his right-hand punch on the ribs, his best blow, was famous and terrific. He was a harder hitter than Jackson, and though up to the end of the sixth round his blows were not so many as his antagonist's, they meant more. Before the men entered the ring that night, Slavin said (Mr. Corri tells us in his book, *Thirty Years a Boxing Referee*): "To be beaten by a black fellow, however good a fellow, is a pill I shall never swallow."

It is unwise to say that sort of thing.

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It has been said, too, that Slavin taunted Jackson in the ring. However that may be, the splendid black man was confident in his quiet, unassuming way, and he at all events held his tongue. His method of fighting too, was orthodox and cool. When at the beginning of the first round Slavin came charging at him, Jackson put out his long straight left, and the white man was shaken by the blow. It was his policy to get close to Jackson so that he could bring off his tremendous body-blow. It was Jackson's policy to keep him away and to box at long range, and he did this. Some young man had once said to Jackson at the club: "They tell me you black chaps don't like being hit in the stomach?" "Can you," Jackson replied, "tell me of any white man who does?" But there is no doubt that negroes are, as a rule, weaker in the stomach than white men, unless like Jack Johnson, the more recent champion, they especially cultivate the abdominal muscles. No doubt Jackson knew, too, that one of Slavin's blows was worth two of his: but he boxed with quiet assurance and defended himself with vigilant care. Again and again Slavin rushed at him and tried to force his way close in: again and yet again Jackson propped him off, reserving his strength while Slavin dissipated his. Slavin was the favourite when the men entered the ring, but it is notorious that the greatest gamblers will, in boxing, back a white man because he is white.

Peter Jackson did not entirely avoid all the white man's blows, but his footwork was wonderfully good, and even when he failed to guard against them, he generally managed to be moving away when a blow landed, so that most of its power was lost. He seldom gave Slavin a chance to put in one of his regular smashers. And in the meantime the accumulated force of the black's many but lesser hits, together with the energy wasted by Slavin in futile charges across the ring, weakened the white man. Up to the sixth round it was any one's fight, though Peter Jackson was an easy winner on points up to that time. But what are points, after all, against one punch whether it is deliberate or "lucky," which ends a fight? And Jackson very nearly fell a

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victim to just such a punch. He had never relaxed his vigilance, he never presumed on his opponent's weakness. He attacked when he saw a safe opening, and for the rest contented himself with holding Slavin well away with that beautiful long straight left. And yet at the end of the sixth round he was all but beaten. Frank Slavin was getting desperate. The men were fighting for a big money prize, but it is unlikely that the £1750 which would be the winner's share was foremost in the white man's mind as he strove in the ring. Jackson was a good black fellow, but he was black, and Slavin's pride of race was very strong in him. Rightly or wrongly, he felt that there was a peculiar shame in accepting defeat from a nigger. But he knew that he would have to make haste. Good as his condition was, these six hard rounds had taken much of his strength. He drew every breath with labour: and though many of a boxer's movements, whether in offence or defence, are instinctive, the work was very hard work, his light boxing boots were like the boots of a diver, his knees shook a little as he stood still. He was very weary. But he meant to win. He gathered himself up and hurled himself at Jackson, and by sheer determination and weight forced the black across the ring to the ropes, and then with all his weight behind it he sent in his tremendous body-blow. Mr. Corri, who was sitting near the ring-side, tells us that it "seemed to spring from the calves of his legs and upwards to the muscles of his right shoulder and right arm." And, "I have never seen such an expression of consummate deadliness upon a human face as that which spread across the features of Slavin at this crucial stage."

The blow doubled Jackson up "like a knife." It caught him just under the heart and the sound of it was heard throughout the hall. The black man gasped and reeled. The onlookers were completely silent save for an involuntary "Oh!" which here and there forced itself to utterance. Had Slavin hit Jackson but half a minute earlier in the round he must have won. The black was helpless. Slavin must have finished him. As it was, before the white man could follow his advantage, the round ended, and

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Jackson had a minute in which to recover. In his corner, and loud enough for Mr. Corri to hear him, Jackson said to his seconds, "If he hits me like that again, I'm done." And his seconds worked on him, sponging, massaging, fanning, doing all that they could to restore him. When time was called for the seventh round Jackson, though no doubt weak, had recovered. He *appeared* to be strong and fit again, and appearances in these circumstances are beneficially deceitful. And in despite of his momentary elation in the last round, Frank Slavin came up tired.

But Jackson had to be careful, and he knew it. He did not lead, but kept his guard rigid, and "used the ring"—that is, by brilliant footwork he kept out of danger, avoiding the ponderous and slackening rushes of his adversary. When the eighth round started, Peter Jackson had quite recovered, and Slavin was slower and more weary than ever. His weakness was evident. But it must not be thought that his was a mere exhibition of brute strength run to seed. Far from it. The white man boxed well, and he, too, kept out of danger. In the next round, however, Jackson sparred with great brilliancy, piling up many points, while just before the end he shot out a particularly good left. Slavin was obviously desperate now, and grew careless of the punishment he received, staking everything upon the chance of bringing off another mighty blow.

And yet weary as both were by now, they came up quite jauntily for the tenth round. Slavin shot out a fierce left, but it only just touched Jackson as he moved back. He rushed at the black man again, and this time Jackson avoided him altogether. Thrice Slavin dashed in with furious left and right quickly following each other. And the third time he tried this, instead of stepping back, Peter Jackson came in to meet him, and ducking Slavin's blows, planted his own left, followed by the right in immediate succession, on the white man's jaw. The second blow came over with terrific force, and Slavin reeled. But he still stood and swung wildly at his man without thought of guarding, his senses almost gone, and only a desperate pluck to keep him from falling. Jackson followed him and rained blows upon him, until

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Slavin stood still hardly able to lift his hands. Whereupon Jackson, good sportsman that he was, turned to Mr. Angle, who was refereeing the match, and raised his eyebrows. "Experience," say the Annals of the National Sporting Club, "has repeatedly shown that there is always a punch left in a big man, even when he appears disabled. Dallying at such a crisis is dangerous. Jackson, however, turned round in the most chivalrous manner and looked at the referee. The rules of the game were beyond dispute. Mr. Angle said: "Fight on." [1]

There was nothing more to be said: "I must finish him, then—sorry, Frank," and with obvious distaste he went in. Even then in his anxiety not to hurt the man he did not hit hard, and Slavin took five blows before he went down. His courage was exemplary. He could so easily have fallen. He stood, however, and took the blows like the man he was. At the fifth he fell forward on his knees and in a blind, instinctive effort to rise again, not knowing what he was doing, he clutched Peter Jackson round the legs. But he could not rise. The ten seconds were counted. For the first time in his life Frank Slavin was beaten, for the first time knocked out.

And Peter Jackson took his victory quite calmly. Without a trace of swagger he returned to his corner, and, later, helped to carry Slavin, who was really ill, out of the ring.

[1] Just before this encounter, Lord Lonsdale, President of the Club, had especially urged his hearers not to use the word "Fight" in connection with these proceedings —in view of the fact, no doubt, that a "Prize-Fight" was illegal. Mr. Angle may have forgotten this, or he may have been misreported. The club's sensitiveness to the use of words is very delicate, and by one of its officials I was once reprimanded at a supper following the Oxford and Cambridge matches for proposing the toast of "The Ring."

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CHAPTER II

JAMES J. CORBETT AND JOHN L. SULLIVAN

THE last three years of the nineteenth century were rich in great encounters, or so, at any rate, it seems to us now. The transition period, when bare-knuckle fighting had degenerated into the most sordid and secret ruffianism, had passed; and a virtually new sport had taken its place. And of all the giant names associated with Boxing as we understand the word, those of Corbett and Sullivan are immortal.

A boxer's life, as a boxer, is a very short one, so that though both of these men have long since passed into the mythology of the Ring, both of them, were both alive, would be, at the time of writing, but of middle age.

James J. Corbett was a highly skilled heavy-weight whose title to fame as a scientific boxer has been much obscured by the fact that he began life by being a bank clerk. This genteel avocation had not formerly been mentioned in conjunction with the Ring, and much was made of the coincidence both in America and England. Corbett was not behindhand in fostering the impression of social superiority. And his nicknames of "Pompadour" and "Gentleman Jem" given him for the arrangement of his hair and his charm of manner, tended rather to overshadow his real merits. This is generally the case with boxers who assume or have assumed for them (by their business managers) airs which have nothing to do with the matter in hand. It is very amusing, when you think of it, how the lovers of boxing have always made implicit apologies for the sport by drawing attention to the extrinsic merits of its exponents. It is perfectly true that far more professional boxers have been blacksmiths or porters or dockers—"working-men," in fact—than bank clerks

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or actors, but at this time of day such comparisons are surely irrelevant.

What matters most to us now is that Corbett was a first-rate boxer. He was a Californian, born in San Francisco in 1866. During the period of clerkdom he won various amateur competitions, and at the age of eighteen, turned professional. In 1889 he beat Joe Choynski—a very powerful slogger—thrice. The first of these battles lasted for twenty-eight rounds and was a particularly fierce one. Corbett was now generally recognised as a supremely scientific boxer. For so big a man his speed was prodigious, and the skill with which he used his feet amazing. He had the build of an all-round athlete, stood six feet one inch, and weighed thirteen stone in hard condition. He belonged to the new generation of boxers, of men who had never fought with bare knuckles. He had the distinction of being what is called a "scientific pugilist" and not a "prize-fighter." And, as already explained, he was a person of some consequence, not a mere hewer of wood or shifter of barrels, but a bank-clerk. No end of a fellow, in fact . . . but he *was* a good boxer.

His encounter with Sullivan took place at New Orleans on September 7th, 1892. It was supposed to be for the Championship of the World (as well as some £9000), but the title should be qualified by the word "white." John Laurence Sullivan had not earned the full title of Champion, because he had, one imagines for his own convenience, refused to fight Peter Jackson. He "drew the colour-line," as the saying is.

Sullivan was a mighty slogger, who had fought a great deal with his naked fists, and was a man of tried courage and endurance, but he was not a man of exceptional scientific skill. He was 5 feet 10½ inches in height, and weighed a good deal over 14 stone. He was thirty-four years of age.

In 1889 he had fought Jake Kilrain, a man with a great reputation, of about the same age, weight, and height. This had been a bare-knuckle affair and had lasted for seventy-five rounds, which occupied two hours and a quarter. On that occasion Sullivan

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John Heenan and Tom Sayers.

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was in magnificent fettle, and very often disdained to rest between the rounds, standing against the ropes in his corner and chatting with his seconds. This fight also took place at or near New Orleans, and as the month was July, it was insufferably hot. Indeed it is a wonder that both men were not touched by the sun. The actual place for the encounter was kept secret, as the police were out to stop it. Indeed they chased the combatants all over the country afterwards. Now Kilrain prided himself on his wrestling and ended the first round by throwing Sullivan with great force to the boards. But to his great astonishment thereafter Sullivan turned the tables on him at that game, and threw him, at various periods of the fight, no less than eleven times. But it was as a smashing hitter that Sullivan had made his name, and it was by terrific hits that he wore Kilrain down. In the third round Sullivan's seconds claimed a foul because they believed his man had hit him below the belt, but this was not allowed by the referee. A few rounds later Kilrain drew first blood by a splitting blow upon the ear, which resulted in making Sullivan coldly furious, and in the next round, the seventh, he knocked Kilrain down with a blow on the jaw which would certainly have ended a glove-fight. After that Kilrain fell at every possible opportunity, sometimes from a light hit, sometimes without being hit at all. He fought very foully, stamping on Sullivan's foot with his spiked shoes. Indeed, the insteps of both of them were severely scored by spikes at the end. It was not an exhilarating encounter. During a great deal of it there was next to no fighting at all. Kilrain kept away and dropped to avoid punishment. His blows, such as they were, became feeble. He was badly beaten. In the forty-fourth round Sullivan was sick, and Kilrain immediately asked him if he would give in. "I don't want to hit you in that condition," he added. To which audacious observation Sullivan replied: "You're crazy. I've got you licked." The "temporary indisposition" did Sullivan a lot of good as a matter of fact, and he fought all the better afterwards. In the seventieth round Kilrain seized Sullivan by the legs and tried to throw him. It was a palpable foul, but then the whole battle was foul so far as he was concerned; and

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the referee was grossly to blame for allowing such a display to proceed. In the end Charley Mitchell, Kilrain's chief second, went over to Sullivan's corner and asked him if he'd give Kilrain a present if he gave in. "Of course I will," said Sullivan: and he was declared the winner. He was very little marked, but Kilrain was both disfigured and exhausted.

Now to return to the later fight, Corbett was much younger, longer in the reach, quicker, in better condition, and much more scientific than Sullivan. On the other hand, the old stager could hit a good deal harder, had far more experience, and was two stone heavier. His only chance lay in an early knock-out. And it was evidently Corbett's best plan to keep away from him and wear out his strength. Sullivan was one of the glaring and stamping kind of boxers who beat timid men before a blow has been struck. To hard-headed and insensitive people it is a matter of perpetual astonishment that sheer bounce and bombast should cow an opponent in the ring; but, as an odd and unhappy fact, it frequently does so. But it took hard blows to beat Jem Corbett. He knew what to expect from Sullivan. He knew that he would try to rush in and beat down his guard and half kill him before the fight had fairly started. And Sullivan did try this. But Corbett was a good boxer and he had character, and he ducked and stepped aside, or stepped back, not attempting to hit, only making sure that he was not hit.

There were people who called Sullivan a coward. He showed no cowardice that day. Even in the fourth round his legs began to grow tired, but he stood up like a man. In the fifth round he caught Corbett a terrible blow on the throat, and he tried to follow it up with a mighty right swing; but though hurt Corbett avoided the second punch and sent in two hard smashes on his antagonist's face. These he instantly doubled with blows on the ribs and nose. Sullivan was dazed, and only the call of time saved him. He was bleeding a good deal when he came up again, but seemed refreshed and wisely kept away out of reach. The seventh round showed that his condition was poor. He was breathing hard, and he misjudged his distance. Corbett

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could hit him almost as he liked; but Sullivan's capacity for taking punishment was almost infinite.

Corbett saw now that he had the fight in hand if he were only careful. Sullivan was weakening before his eyes, but he dare take no risks. Once he sent in a right which closed the older man's left eye, and after that he drove in some good body blows, but he held his hand a little. He must not go "all out" until there was no possibility left of a "lucky" punch from Sullivan.

And yet the beginning of each round found the veteran fairly fresh and always game. The minute's rest and the attentions of thoroughly competent seconds revived him wonderfully, so that Corbett began to feel just a little uncertain. What punishment the man could take! Ah, but "youth would be served," and Corbett's nimbleness of foot kept him out of danger. The eleventh round started by Sullivan brilliantly attacking with the left on the head followed by a hard right on the body. For a moment the onlookers believed that Sullivan had turned the tide in his own favour. Corbett was hurt: if only the old chap could keep it up. . . . But the young one fell into a clinch—a thing he never seemed reluctant to do in order to avoid punishment, and as they broke away he sent a right to his opponent's chin which drove his head back. The next three rounds were slow. Corbett felt confident again, finally confident. He was perfectly sure of his man by this time. Sullivan was trying to ease the pace a little, for he was clearly done, and Corbett would take things comfortably for a while to reserve his own strength, keeping the big man well exercised, though, so that he should not recover his wind. In the sixteenth round Corbett sent a left hook to the body which visibly shook Sullivan, who was unable to land one blow that mattered. True that in this round Sullivan pulled himself together and aimed a blow which would certainly have stretched Corbett senseless if it had landed on his jaw; but then Corbett entirely avoided it, and sent home three spanking blows on the face without a return. And yet, after being virtually a beaten man for several rounds, John Sullivan was the better man in the

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seventeenth. He began by knocking Corbett down, not severely it is true, for he caught him when he was for once standing in a bad position with his feet almost level. And Corbett found that he could hit hard still. Indeed he was a giant of strength, and if his legs had been as strong as the rest of him he should have won. He rushed Corbett to the ropes and forced him back against them and hit him left and right. Corbett was profoundly thankful for the call of time. He was very cautious when they came up again. He remembered all his boxing, which is exactly what a weary man is often incapable of. He knew that Sullivan felt that he might have a chance yet by rushing him off his feet; and when the rush came he was ready. Instead of stepping aside this time he timed his adversary nicely, and sent out a right which took Sullivan on the jaw. It was a damaging blow, but the veteran went on fighting. In the next round he put his own right on Corbett's jaw and spun him round, but failed to fluster him or seriously shake him. For the rest of that round Corbett kept a respectful distance and sparred. Then at the beginning of the twentieth Corbett realised that his turn had come. He began at once by rushing in his turn, got Sullivan up against the ropes, clinched to hold him there, broke and banged his right on the body and shot a half-arm blow to the side of the head. Sullivan was in a bad way. He reeled, and Corbett came after him, but the call of time intervened. Sullivan was now hopelessly beaten. He came pluckily up for the twenty-first round, but could hardly put up his hands. Corbett smashed in a right swing to his jaw and the veteran fell. The yells of the watching crowd, and particularly those of his seconds in the corner, helped to steel his resolution, and he dragged himself up at the sixth second. Corbett immediately hit him again, thrice, and it was all over.

Youth had been served, and the boxer had beaten the slogger, which, other things being equal, he invariably does.

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CHAPTER III

ROBERT FITZSIMMONS AND JAMES J. CORBETT

ROBERT FITZSIMMONS was in all respects the opposite number of Jem Corbett. He was in the great tradition of fighting blacksmiths. A rough, simple soul, who was perfectly content to be a prize-fighter. Three or four years younger than Corbett, a Cornishman by birth, he had emigrated to New Zealand with his people, as a lad. His first successes were won in amateur competitions organised by Jem Mace, the old bare-knuckle champion. Later on he went to Sydney and learned under Larry Foley, himself a pupil of Mace. In 1890 he moved to San Francisco, and for some years he carried all before him. He beat Peter Maher, Jem Hall, Joe Choynski, and Dan Creedon. Then, in 1891, he knocked out Jack Dempsey in thirteen rounds, for the World's Middle-weight Championship. Fitzsimmons was just short of six feet in height, and, at the time of his fight with Corbett, he had filled out from the middle-weight limit of 11 stone 4 lb. and was now slightly over 12 stone. His is another name that will never be forgotten so long as men talk of boxing.

The match between these two was of great importance at the time, and (this is so seldom the case) it is important to look back on: for it was a fight between two strong men, both of great reputation, with somewhat similar records, but perfectly different methods. It was a match between an intensely scientific boxer and a rugged fighter, who had, however, a kind of skill or shrewdness not closely related to conventional boxing science, which carried him very far. Fitzsimmons was, indeed, a more remarkable man than Corbett.

In order to explain Fitzsimmons to the best of my ability, it will be necessary to make a small excursion into autobiography.

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Just before Christmas of 1908, Fitzsimmons came to England on a music-hall tour. He was due to arrive in London one Sunday afternoon, and it occurred to me to meet him at the station and ask him to box with me. It would be an interesting experience. I went to St. Pancras, and waited until the regular interviewers had finished with him. I was not anxious for any one to overhear my curious request. Just as he was getting into a taxi with his manager, I asked him if he would put on the gloves with me that night. He needed a good deal of persuading, but in a slow, unsmiling way he was a good-natured fellow, and after a while he consented. Accordingly we met later on in a private room at the National Sporting Club, and boxed two rounds. The only other person present (it being Sunday night, the club was, officially, closed) was Fitzsimmons's manager.

It is not affectation to describe this encounter as a real pleasure. Making due allowance for the self-complacency an amateur (in all senses of that misused word) would feel at taking on a great champion, I can honestly say that I enjoyed those two rounds for their own sakes. Of course, I knew perfectly well that he wouldn't " eat " me; but quite apart from any competitive spirit, which, in this case would have been absurd, boxing is a definitely enjoyable pastime.

I emerged from the encounter with a black eye, and—for the first time in my life—a bleeding nose, but my experience had been extremely interesting. Fitzsimmons was taller than I, much heavier, and far longer in the arm, but I found him quite easy to hit. I suppose I can't quite exclude the " competitive spirit " after all, let alone my amateur self-complacency, for I was delighted at sending in one really hard straight left which took Fitzsimmons on the mouth and sent his head right back. If I say, with all diffidence, that it was a respectable blow, it is only to emphasise the fact that my opponent's head, driven back, sprang forward again exactly like a steel spring. In fact, you could always hit Fitzsimmons, but it wanted a Jefferies to hurt him, as we shall see later on. He was an awkwardly made man, hard and angular, with a back and shoulders phenomenally developed.

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His very long arms may be compared to wire-bound bamboo, and unlike the arms of heroes in fictitious boxing stories, with no biceps to speak of and indeed no special show of muscle at all.

Fitzsimmons was not a first-rate boxer, because he had never learned to defend himself, but he had an almost infinite capacity for taking punishment, which was his title to genius in the ring.

The great fight between Fitzsimmons and Corbett for the championship took place at Carson City, Nevada, on March 17th, 1897. No love was lost between the two men, who refused to shake hands at the beginning. Bad feeling in sport is, no doubt, deplorable, but as in this case it does not necessarily spoil sport.

It was evident that both men were nervous and showed the utmost respect and caution for one another. Fitzsimmons led off with the left, and Corbett ducked. This lanky, raw-boned, skull-faced man troubled him. Fitzsimmons's eyes were like those of an ill-tempered horse—fierce and cold. And they were merciless. The American missed the more comfortable and open ruffianism of some of the men he had fought, or the full-blooded and jovial savagery of John Sullivan. Nevertheless, he got in the first blow, and thereafter paid most of his attention to his man's body. Before the first round was over his confidence returned, and his greater skill in ducking and slipping and getting away was manifest. In this, as in most of the subsequent rounds, Corbett showed himself by far the better boxer, and he was well ahead of his opponent on points. Other things being equal, the better boxer wins. But other things in this battle were not equal.

Let us try to put ourselves, so to speak, in Corbett's shoes. He must have been quite satisfied that he had won the first round on points, and we may be sure that his seconds did not fail to hearten him. He began the next round with his full confidence, and attacked. Fitzsimmons replied, and they fell into a clinch. Indeed this round was spoiled by much hugging and holding, though once Corbett broke away to put in two quick hard lefts on his antagonist's head which seemed to stagger him. In the next round he came in close and put in a hard right over the

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heart, which drove his man back. Fitzsimmons glared and showed signs of anger, and made a futile rush at Corbett which must have pleased him greatly. To see evident signs of temper in your opponent inspires confidence. You feel that if he really loses his temper he will lose his head and become wild. Practised boxers seldom do this, because they know that with a fresh and still vigorous man real "wildness" means a speedy downfall. But Fitzsimmons never lost his head in that sense. He may have been angry in a way of speaking, but he could keep a hold on himself. As though to remind him that he must not charge like that, Corbett stopped him again and again with hard counters on the ribs. In the fourth round the pace of the fighting became furious, Fitzsimmons still being somewhat reckless, hitting much harder than Corbett but not nearly so accurately. In the meantime the American avoided nearly all the punishment intended for him by the most graceful and polished footwork. Both men were by now a little winded and fought slower through the next round. Corbett again showed himself markedly the better boxer, landing blows with both hands and getting away out of distance without any trouble. There was a little clinching, and then a hard left from Corbett made Fitzsimmons's nose bleed. He was now perfectly happy. He felt that it was only a question of time and he would have his man well beat.

Fitzsimmons's wife, who was present at the ring-side, was now heard to urge her husband to attack the body. But in this sixth round, before he could act successfully on that good advice, Corbett came in close and sent a whizzing upper-cut to the Cornishman's jaw which sent his right foot tapping involuntarily in the way that always happens with a jaw-blow just not hard enough or accurate enough to knock a man down. Just after that Corbett landed again and Fitzsimmons fell, remaining down for nine seconds. Corbett's heart must have glowed. True, the nearly beaten man rose and managed to fend off his opponent's triumphant attack for the rest of the round. But Corbett went back to his corner not greatly disappointed. It was no doubt a pity that he couldn't finish him off at once: but surely the effect

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of that knock-down blow would be felt at the end of the minute's rest. Surely—and yet—would it? There may likely have been a subconscious shadow of doubt in Corbett's mind. He was himself tired, and, though his seconds whispering to him took his immediate victory for granted, they were just a little anxious. The seventh round found Corbett dashing in to complete his work. Right and left again and again he smashed into Fitzsimmons's face, bruising and battering, almost pulping it so that hardly a feature was distinguishable. But the effort tired him, and he failed to land a blow on the vulnerable jaw. With a man so reckless of defence as Fitzsimmons, it was, as already explained, easy enough to land a blow—just a blow and another. But to land that blow where no hardihood can stand against it, that is, at the side of the chin, is another matter, and calls for thought and guile. And the cunning though not yet the strength seemed to have gone from Corbett. When a boxer is worn out it is often his forethought and ringcraft which give out before the actual force of his blows. And Fitzsimmons must have looked horrible, soaked in blood and with ferocious eyes and the iron hardness of his limbs still full of spring and vigour. With his long arms swinging, he slouched round the ring watching his opportunity. In the eighth round Corbett sent a driving left straight to his mouth and split his lip so that more blood flowed, and again and yet again Corbett stopped his furious rushes with straight blows, so that Fitzsimmons battered himself upon them by flinging forward his own weight. But it seemed impossible to hurt this thin, awkward man. And Corbett grew more and more cautious, and in his heart more hopeless. His footwork was still a miracle of speed and neatness, and he kept dancing in and away again, dealing out to his opponent a series of hooks and swings and uppercuts which must have defeated a man of even his own build and lasting power. But footwork should be economical and never for show, and Corbett was using his feet more than was necessary, and adding, in this way, to the whole encounter's great total of fatigue. And so it went on till the fourteenth round—Fitzsimmons bashed about, staggered sometimes, out-boxed and out-generalled

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in every round, but still strong and agile and ferocious. Corbett, weighed down with infinite weariness and unmarked.

It was a hard test for him, as it is for any man in like case. His very arms were an intolerable weight, he was sick with weariness. And—he was unhurt and was faced by a virtually beaten man. And now he dragged his feet and his pace was gone from him. He could not see a moment ahead. He could only do the simple things. He could lead with his left and did so. And Fitzsimmons dodged the blow and they fell into a clinch, and the Cornishman grinned wickedly over his shoulder. His moment had come now and he was quite sure about it. They broke away, and Fitzsimmons came in again, sliding his feet along the boards with an almost reptilian movement. With his left foot foremost he sent a hard left to Corbett's mark: then whipped his feet over, left behind right, almost in one movement, and shot his right up from below to the jaw. The American's face was seen to go gray. His great body seemed slowly to crumble and he went down. As the referee counted the seconds he struggled to rise. But he was paralysed—out.

When at last he did manage by an heroic effort to find his feet again he lost his head and wildly threw himself at his antagonist. Seconds and officials leapt between the men and held him away. Great strength and an abnormal capacity for endurance had beaten one of the finest boxers who ever claimed the Championship of the World.

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CHAPTER IV

JAMES J. JEFFERIES AND ROBERT FITZSIMMONS

JAMES J. JEFFERIES was an enormous fellow who for many years held the World's Championship. He stood 6 feet 1½ inches, and his weight was generally in the neighbourhood of fifteen stone. He was born in 1879, and before he was twenty he had at least eight conquests to his name, and had fought drawn battles of twenty rounds each with such men as Gus Ruhlin and Joe Choynski. And having knocked out the majority of his opponents in a very few rounds, and being a man of phenomenal strength and hitting power, it naturally followed that he should challenge Bob Fitzsimmons for the World's Championship. This he did, and the fight took place at Coney Island Athletic Club, near New York, on June 9th, 1899.

If it wanted a sledge-hammer to hurt Fitzsimmons, the hammer of Thor was needed for Jefferies. There has seldom, if ever, been a man who could take a harder blow, whether on the "mark" or the jaw, without turning a hair. He was not a scientific boxer of the first order, but he was no mere windmill, and he knew enough not to fight "raggedly." He was, however, slow.

In arranging the conditions of the match beforehand, Fitzsimmons was anxious to have all hitting in holds forbidden, as it is by the strict English rules: that is to say, he preferred a clean break from a clinch. In most boxing contests now, both in England and America, when the referee stands in the ring he breaks the men away from each other, often by the use of considerable force, and passes between them. By this means each man has time to get ready again to start fighting in a fair manner. Jefferies objected strongly, for a man of his great weight and power

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can do a great deal of damage by hitting "on the break-away." Fitzsimmons was a very fair fighter, and upheld the English tradition in respect of clinches. Also, he knew, of course, that a clean break was greatly to his advantage. In the end the point was left to the referee, who thrust himself between the men to end a clinch.

The ring used was only 22 feet square; no weights were announced before the fight, but Fitzsimmons was probably between twelve and thirteen stone, whilst Jefferies was evidently a good two stone heavier.

From the very beginning it was seen that the old champion was much the better boxer, Jefferies much the stronger man. Heaven knows that Robert Fitzsimmons in his lean and lanky way was strong enough for six, quite apart from his spiritual qualities of will-power and courage. But Jefferies was phenomenal —is, no doubt, still; for though one speaks of him in the past tense, because this fight took place many years ago, he is at the time of writing still a comparatively young man.

At the time of this encounter Fitzsimmons himself was only, and also, a young man in the comparative sense. He was thirty-six, and in despite of his agility he was stiffer and less alert than he had been. Only two years had gone by since his great battle with Jem Corbett, but they were two years of great significance in the life of an athlete.

He began with his old brilliance of footwork, darting in and out, hitting Jefferies almost as he liked: but his blows were not hard, not hard enough, not so hard as they used to be. On points the first round was certainly his, and he wound it up by sending home a splendid right on his man's ear. The second round was much spoiled by clinching. Jefferies began to assert himself, landing hard on body and face. He crouched low, and with his forearms close to protect his head, "bored in," as they say, and went for Fitzsimmons's body with short-arm blows behind which he swung his huge weight. Fitzsimmons tried to put in a right upper-cut, but his adversary guarded it and they clinched, the referee parting them. Immediately afterwards Jefferies shot out

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a straight left which caught the Cornishman hard in the face when he was standing square, so that he was off his balance, and the blow knocked him down flat on his back. Such a knock-down as that does little harm, and Fitzsimmons rose at once, scorning to take advantage, as so many men would have done, of the ten seconds' count. It should be remembered that the blow on the jaw which ends, or nearly ends, a fight makes a man fall forward. The third round was very even: they had settled down to hard fighting, and there was a good exchange of blows. The same may be said for the next round, except that Jefferies's punches were much harder, and once Fitzsimmons was visibly shaken. He must have realised about this time that the odds were considerably against him. He had excellent opportunities for virtually free blows—blows which he could deliver with all his power, perfectly timed, and nicely judged. And they seemed not to inconvenience Jefferies at all. He tried his famous "shift" upon him without avail, that trick of his own invention by means of which he beat Jem Corbett—that dancing, glancing change of feet so that the right hand followed the right foot and smashed into the body under the heart and then glanced upwards to the jaw. Jefferies stood it all, and crouched and glowered and came on, quite impervious to anything that he could do. Once again Fitzsimmons decidedly "won" the sixth round. But of what use was that? He showed himself the better boxer, he landed more hits than his antagonist landed. That was all. There were to be other rounds beyond the sixth, and Jefferies was unhurt, unweakened, only biding his time. The seventh was the same, and this time Jefferies showed a little uncertainty. Fitzsimmons with his years of experience might be feeling a little desperate: Jefferies was only a lad, and realised the great difficulty of landing a punishing blow. No one knew better than he how much cleverer a boxer was the Cornishman. Jefferies was slow to start work in this round, and even, it seemed, a little reluctant. He kept backing away to avoid Fitzsimmons's rushes. The old champion never charged blindly at his man; he knew too much for that. But he could get with extraordinary speed across the ring,

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coming with a sliding, slithering movement which was snake-like in its quickness and certainty. And the expression of his face and especially of his light blue eyes was terribly and coldly fierce. For all the awkward, unsmiling kindness of his nature, Fitzsimmons could look a very devil when he was fighting.

After a little Jefferies halted and tried to force his man up against the ropes, but Fitzsimmons nipped easily away and held his own comfortably. But he was not happy. He could not hurt his opponent, and before this he had been used to make himself felt in seven rounds. In the next round Jefferies was again slow and reluctant at the outset, but after a little sparring he put in a couple of lefts without serious return, and later finished the round with a spanking straight left which sent Fitzsimmons staggering half across the ring.

The ninth round settled the matter. Fitzsimmons led off and attacked ferociously, but was sent back again with just such a left as had troubled him in the previous set-to. He left his body open, and Jefferies swung all his great strength and all his mighty weight into a body-blow which caught the veteran over the heart. He gasped audibly and time was called. But that was the winning blow. The fight was knocked out of Fitzsimmons. He was still almost dazed when he came up for the tenth round. Again Jefferies used that best and safest of all blows, the straight left, and Fitzsimmons was shaken to his heels. He could not defend himself: he could only stand and take what he was given. The next blow sent him to the ground, and he only rose, very groggy, at the seventh second. And now, though it made no ultimate difference, Jefferies lost his head. Fitzsimmons had been beaten by the blow over his heart, the effect of which would last much longer and take far more out of him than three or four on the jaw which failed to knock him out. But Jefferies could not have known that for certain at this moment: and seeing his man weak and tottering he swung wildly at him. If he himself had not been so extraordinarily strong, or if the elder man had not been already broken, he might well have lost the fight by that wildness. It has happened scores of times. As

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it was, an inferior blow from Jefferies knocked Fitzsimmons down again, but only for five seconds. Done as the old champion was, the blow must have been a comparatively poor one, or he could not have risen in the time, though, as had happened earlier in the fight, his pride would not allow him to take full advantage of the "count." Even then, in his excitement, Jefferies failed to finish his man, and the round ended.

Then the eleventh round began, and Fitzsimmons showed the stuff that he was made of. He always had the reputation of being strong, and hard, and phenomenally plucky: but he had been badly hurt by that blow in the ninth round and the cumulative effect of several others. Yet he did not mean to be beaten without a great struggle. Immediately time was called he dashed across the ring and attacked Jefferies with all his might. It was not of the slightest use, for Jefferies was quite ready for him and the veteran was too weak now to do any damage, but it was a good effort. Jefferies waited for him to expose his body and then sent two more hard right-handers to his heart; then several blows at the head, ending with a left half-arm blow which dazed Fitzsimmons, so that he stood, or rather tottered, helpless, with his arms down, in the middle of the ring. Jefferies looked at him for a moment to make quite sure that he was as bad as he seemed, then swung left, followed by right, to the point of the jaw. Fitzsimmons fell forward, down and out.

In spite of his age and his defeat at Jefferies's hands, Fitzsimmons challenged the champion to a second battle three years later; and on July 25th, 1902, they met again at San Francisco. It was not much of a fight, and the whole business was viewed with great disfavour in England. It was regarded as an outrageous commercial transaction: and indeed it was little more. Fitzsimmons, in fact, consented to be thrashed for so much down—consented, rather, to risk the very strong probability; for no one suggested that the fight was not a perfectly square one. Fitzsimmons was now only 11 stone 6 lb., whilst Jefferies weighed 15 stone 5 lb., quite an absurd difference when we remember also the disparity of their ages. Once more there was

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no sort of doubt but that the Cornishman was the better boxer. He had forgotten nothing: Jefferies had learned very little. The first two rounds were slightly in Fitzsimmons's favour, but after that the big man's huge natural advantages made the end inevitable. At the end of the second round Fitzsimmons was bleeding severely from the nose, and it usually takes a very heavy blow indeed to draw much blood from the nose of an old hand. But Jefferies's cheek and eye were also cut and bleeding, for Fitzsimmons had not treated him gently. In the fourth round Jefferies crouched low and glowered at his man, bent on hurting him. He guarded the beautiful long straight lefts that Fitzsimmons sent whizzing in and attacked the slighter man's body. The next round was very fast, whilst the men were fighting; but there was a good deal of clinching too, in which Fitzsimmons, however much he tried to save himself, got the worst of it, because the overwhelming weight of his adversary was thrown forward on to him. Superficially Jefferies looked much the worst of the two, for Fitzsimmons's sharp blows had cut his face in several places and he was bleeding profusely. This was due not so much to the hardness of the older man's hitting as to the softness of Jefferies's skin: for the champion could generally beat his opponents so easily that severe training seemed to him not worth the candle. Fitzsimmons was unmarked, but the damage was partly to his body and visible only in vague red blotches such as gloved fists make, and partly in store for him. And yet by boxing he had the better of the sixth round, and his hope rose. He was not a man of vivid imagination, just a healthily hopeful fellow, with plenty of self-confidence. Jefferies had beaten him once, and only a round or two before he had been winning—winning on points, at any rate. He had forgotten that fight now. He only knew that he was his adversary's master in the art of boxing, and surely good boxing, skill, ringcraft, experience would win now? Did he think about it like that? Not at all. There was no time for thinking, only for an instinctive effort to do his best, to put in one of his very best and hardest blows on the point of the jaw—not the exact point,

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Bob Fitzsimmons and James J. Corbett.
(A Caricature.)

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but an inch or so on either side of the exact point. That was where the impact of his glove must come, that part of his glove behind which lay the protruding knuckle of his second finger —the striking point of the anatomical piston. He must land that blow with terrific force, and the sharp upper end of the jaw would be levered up to the bundle of nerves at the place where the skull is thinnest, the semi-circular canals behind the ear would be temporarily deranged, the sense of equilibrium would go, there would be, speaking roughly and somewhat incorrectly, a slight and quickly passing concussion of the brain. The victim would fall, the old champion would be a champion once again. . . . Desperately Fitzsimmons tried to land that blow. But the sixth round ended and nothing happened. In the next round Jefferies came crouching, but rushing, across the ring, and Fitzsimmons caught him with a hard left on the mouth; and a little later, Jefferies, with blood to get rid of, stopped to spit (or to "expectorate," as the sporting papers, with their inimitable refinement, put it). It was, I suppose, a legitimate opportunity, though a fastidiously chivalrous boxer would not have used it: in any case, Fitzsimmons did, and attacked his man with all his might. He sent in three hard blows, meant for the jaw, which again got Jefferies on the mouth, doing no decisive damage, and before time was called again Jefferies had got home upon the heart with one of his devastating rights, just as he had done in the previous encounter. They began the eighth round with fairly equal exchanges, and then fell into a clinch. They broke away, and as he stepped back Fitzsimmons began to talk. Now, there is no doubt that he had hurt Jefferies; certainly he had hurt him more than in the match at Coney Island. It is not to be said that he would have won if he had been more careful—who can say? The probabilities are against it. But he began to talk to Jefferies, and he paused to do so. It is most surely true that you cannot do two things at once when one of them is fighting. I don't know what Fitzsimmons said, but we may be pretty sure that his words were words of scorn. "Mouth-fighting," as it is called, is a more foolish than reprehensible practice. To

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stand and invent rude epithets for your antagonist, to shower invective upon him, to deride his method of boxing, or to impugn his sportsmanship is so very far beside the point—especially the point of the jaw, which is the real bone of contention. And in order to talk Fitzsimmons necessarily laid aside his strict vigilance. And Jefferies, who wasn't always slow, took a most legitimate advantage and swung his left at long range at his opponent's stomach. It was, on the whole, a lucky blow, for it caught Fitzsimmons just beneath the breast-bone at that point which we call the " mark." And the Cornishman, for once, was taken unawares: the blow made him gasp, and it made him tuck in his stomach instinctively, with the result of bringing his head forward and down. Jefferies's huge left swung back and forward, again, catching him full on the jaw. And once again Fitzsimmons knees gave, his face went ashen gray, his body sank forward . . . seven, eight, nine—Out!

After this defeat Fitzsimmons fought about ten other battles, though four of them hardly count, as they took place in those states of the American Union where only short contests are allowed, and failing a knock-out no decision must be given by the referee. Such contests seem to us quite pointless. If men are giving an exhibition of scientific boxing, as for charity or as on one occasion or another they often do in this and other countries, why should it not be called an exhibition, even if the sparring partners are heavily paid for that purpose? For, of course, the tendency in No-Decision contests is for the men to " go easy " and not to try to knock each other out. And if men are boxing their best so far as science goes and yet not giving their physical best to the affair, the whole event is apt to be meaningless. Besides, science and physique are intermingled. A man is not boxing his best who doesn't try to finish his opponent as speedily as possible, who doesn't try, that is, to assert his superiority of combined force and skill.

Fitzsimmons won battles again, and lost them again. And he went on fighting till 1914—not very long before his death, at the age of fifty-four or so.

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CHAPTER V

TOMMY BURNS AND JACK JOHNSON

If the last decade of the nineteenth century saw the growth of glove-fighting to a high level of scientific achievement, the first decade of the twentieth saw the decline of its management to the uttermost pit of low commercial enterprise. Not that the promotion of any professional athletic contest has ever been entirely free from the besmirching influences of money: it has not. Rascality apart, there have always been hucksters who shouted their merchandise of weight and muscle and skill in raucous and unseemly tones. But when real if degraded cunning is brought to the job, the issues are obscured, and unsophisticated sportsmen, behind the times in business methods, are apt to be deceived.

Fighters, you may say, are born, whilst champions are made —in Fleet Street and the complementary thoroughfares of New York and San Francisco. A particular boxer is discussed in some newspaper every day for a considerable period. He is advertised, in fact. You get accustomed to the fellow's name in exactly the same way as you get accustomed to the name of some coffee or toffee, tailor or tinker. You begin to regard him, quite unconsciously, as an inevitable concomitant of everyday life. And when the paper tells you that he is a champion, you, having a general interest in boxing but knowing very little about it, accept him as a champion.

This boxer happens to be a good boxer, wins many fights, and you take it as a matter-of-course. The newspaper pats itself as you might say, loudly on the back for having made a good shot. The boxer happens to be a bad boxer and is beaten every time, and you and the newspaper denounce and deride him—you,

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because what you thought was your opinion is shown to be wrong, the newspaper which (in collaboration with the boxer's manager, business-manager, publicity-manager, and general manager) invented the poor fellow: because it is unable to flatter itself.

The genuine champion, who will be content with a small c, is not made by newspapers. By his own merits he emerges from the ruck and he makes his own way. But he can make his way, probably, much quicker with the aid of newspapers, managers, who sometimes exploit him, and other sound business methods: and not his way only, but his fortune. Carpentier is a transcendent example. He is a magnificent boxer, who was bound to have made a name for himself by boxing and boxing alone. And we do not grudge him the fortune which boxing and boxing alone would not have brought to him. But we do grudge the vast sums made by spurious champions (or their managers), and the sums much more vast and rolling and altogether disgusting made by the promoters of what are, virtually, spurious contests.

Now the most notorious boxer of the first ten years of the present century, a really good fighter, of unorthodox methods and exemplary fortitude, was Tommy Burns. His real name was Noah Brusso, he was said to be a French Canadian by birth, and he had won the World's Heavy-weight Championship by beating Marvin Hart in 1906. He was born in 1881, stood 5 feet 7 inches, and weighed 12 stone 7 lb. He was very broad for his height, and always somewhat inclined to fatness.

In 1907 Burns came to England, and in that and the following year summarily knocked out the best men that England could find to meet him. Our best in this country at that time were very poor indeed. Gunner Moir, quite a third-rate boxer in point of skill, was Champion of England. There was the wildest excitement about his match with Burns, because Moir's prowess had been trumpeted far beyond its merits. Burns knocked him out in ten rounds. It was a disgraceful affair, because there can be no doubt that the Canadian could easily have beaten him much sooner. On that occasion it certainly seemed as though he were

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boxing to please, or rather not to disappoint the spectators. The public like to have "value for money." And, of course, there are always cinematograph rights. What will the much larger public, outside the actual place of battle, say if the film consists, as it has done before now, of five minutes' display of American pressmen, seconds, and other boxers who have nothing to do with the matter in hand, and half a minute's fighting with three visible blows? The public will be disgusted, and they won't go to see that picture, and the film-rights will be negligible. I am unable to remember whether moving pictures were taken of the encounter between Tommy Burns and Gunner Moir, but if they were that would be a sufficient, if not a good, reason for the unnecessarily protracted bout, as it certainly has been the reason in other contests.

Burns, then, was Heavy-weight Champion of the World, and was, in the course of nature, liable to be challenged to fight for his title. And there had come into prominence a huge negro, Jack Johnson, who was anxious to fight Burns. In England we had hitherto heard very little of Johnson. He was three years older than the white champion, stood 6 feet and one-half inch, and weighed 15 stone. He appears to have started his career in 1899, and from that year down to December, 1908, when he finally succeeded in getting a match with Burns, he had fought sixty-five contests, half of which he won by means of a knock-out. Excepting Peter Jackson, he was about as good a black boxer as had ever been known. He was very strong, very quick, a hard hitter, and extraordinarily skilful in defence. He was by no means unintelligent, and, not without good reason, was regarded generally with the greatest possible dislike. With money in his pocket and physical triumph over white men in his heart, he displayed all the gross and overbearing insolence which makes what we call the buck nigger insufferable. He was one of the comparatively few men of African blood who, in a half-perceiving way, desire to make the white man pay for the undoubted ill-treatment of his forbears.

Whether Tommy Burns really wanted to avoid Johnson or

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not it is difficult to say. Certainly, it seemed as though he did. Or, on the other hand, the long procrastination may have been deliberate, with the end in view of rousing public excitement, to its uttermost pitch of intensity: and thus, perhaps, of acquiring more pelf. Burns succeeded, at all events, in rousing the public impatience and irritation which immediately precedes boredom. And it would be a dull business to trace the whole story of Johnson's efforts to get into a ring with him. It is enough to say that he finally succeeded, a match was made, and the two men entered the ring at Rushcutter's Bay, Sydney, New South Wales, on December 26th, 1908.

As so often happens in a black and white affair, feeling ran very high, and it was feared by responsible people that black, in the person of Jack Johnson, would not on this occasion get a fair chance. But as the event proved, the fight was perfectly fair—in that sense, and we may be sure that Johnson was well cared for and guarded. Interference by the police was by way of being expected, and it was arranged before the contest that if the police did stop the fight in its course, the referee would give a decision on the merits of the encounter up to the moment of interference.

If Johnson's demeanour had always been insolent, it is unnecessary to look for another word to describe the conduct of Tommy Burns. For all I know, at heart Burns may have been a modest man, though I don't think so. But to hear him talk you would think that no other boxer had ever existed. There are two ways of getting a hearing and of making people think well of you: one is to talk as though the person spoken to was the most important and interesting and delightful man or woman alive, to talk with such conviction in that way that the person in question believes himself to be just that. The other way is to shout aloud that *you* are the most important person (and all the other things) alive, and upon my soul, if you shout loud enough you will find believers. Naturally or deliberately, Burns did this, and quite a large number of people believed in him. And it must always be remembered that they had something to believe

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in. Burns was a decidedly good boxer. His manner in the ring was unorthodox. He had no settled attitude or position to take up at the beginning or return to between rallies. He kept his hands and his feet in the positions which suited the demands of the moment. His style was loose and easy, and he could hit hard. Also he went in for glaring balefully at his opponents, stamping on the floor to inspire terror, and worst, "mouth-fighting," pouring vituperation upon his man and telling him exactly what he was going to do to him. All this sort of thing makes modern professional boxing a sorry business, though no peculiarly bad instances have occurred lately. Indeed, boxers have begun to understand that it does not pay.

The men entered the ring on the appointed day, and Johnson's natural advantages were at once evident. He was taller, heavier, and stronger than Burns. They were both well trained, but Burns always scorned the conventional abstinences and smoked cigars right up to and including the day of a fight. He never looked really hard all over. And now directly the fight started Johnson began by going straight for his opponent and knocking him down. Burns rose in eight seconds, obviously shaken. He crouched with his right hand forward and his left back, and attacked the black man's body. Johnson kept away from him and sent his right across to Burns's chin, rather too high to bring him down again, but enough to make him stagger. Then Burns sent home a blow on the jaw, but not a good one, and a hard opening round came to an end. No one supposed then that Burns stood the faintest chance of winning. But Burns was going to do his best. He was acutely conscious of his position as the white champion. He was filled with passionate antagonism to the black man because he was black. Right or wrong, this antagonism is one of the strongest prejudices that moves men. And there was nothing about Johnson, as there certainly was about Peter Jackson, to mitigate the accident of his birth. Rather the contrary.

The second round began, and the negro taunted his white opponent. He, too, was a great hand at "mouth-fighting," but as he talked he boxed, and he swung his right and caught Burns

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on the chin. The white man stumbled slightly and his ankle gave so that he fell, but he rose again at once to receive a straight blow on his left eye, which immediately began to swell. Then Johnson put in a swing on Burns's stomach. It was his round, and he went to his corner grinning widely, as only a black man can. Burns tried to get close at the next set-to, and again and again hit his adversary's ribs, but these blows made no impression on Johnson who, whilst the in-fighting continued, struck Burns heavily over the kidneys. During the fourth round both men talked, heaping insults upon each other. And so it went on. Once, after pounding Burns heavily on the ribs, Johnson clinched and over the white man's shoulder laughed for the benefit of the crowd, and made ironic observations to Burns. It was in the seventh round that Johnson began seriously to hurt his man, and it was palpable to experienced onlookers that he was trying to do so. "I thought Tommy was an in-fighter," he called out, and sent Burns violently down with a terrific right on the body. Both the white man's eyes were now swollen, he was bleeding at the mouth, and Johnson was all over him, hitting him as he liked, left and right, hard, but not too hard. He could have knocked him out at any time now, but that was not at all his idea of fun at the expense of the white race. He would keep him on his feet and hurt him. He knew Burns would never give in so long as he could stand. He no doubt guessed that the referee would not stop the fight so long as the smallest chance remained of a lucky blow from Burns.

Then the talking began again. "Come on, Tommy, swing your right," the black laughed, and Burns snarled back, "Yellow Dog!" A disgusting performance on both sides, you say? Yes: and yet there was something wonderfully fine about Burns that day. His prejudice may have been foolish, his behaviour in talking, whether he started it or not, was childish, his methods of self-advertisement before the fight reached the nethermost pit of vulgarity. But he was game. To take a beating at any time, even from your best friend, is hard work. But take a beating from a man you abhor, belonging to a race you despise,

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to know that he was hurting you and humiliating you with the closest attention to detail, and the coldest deliberation, to know that you don't stand more than one chance in a hundred of landing a blow which could hurt him, and not one in ten thousand of beating him, and to go on fighting, doing your best to attack, your utmost to defend yourself, with your knees weak, your hands too heavy to lift, your eyes almost blinded, your head singing and dizzy—this requires pluck.

By the tenth round even Johnson was a little tired, but Burns was nearly done. His valiant but futile efforts to land a damaging blow drew forth the laughter of his adversary, who stepped away from him and banged him on the back or sent his right whizzing up from underneath to smash his wind, or pound him on the nose and mouth. Burns's mouth indeed had been badly cut some time ago, and round after round Johnson hit it again and yet again, never missing, always with the fiendish desire to injure and to give pain. In the thirteenth round it was seen that the police were getting restive, they were closing in upon the ring, having in mind, no doubt, the likelihood of a serious attack being made upon Johnson. And Burns, reeling against the ropes, gasped out an appeal to the referee to let the fight go on and not to let the police interfere—which, naturally, was beyond the power of the referee. The fourteenth round was the last. Burns tried to hit, then retreated, and Johnson following quickly sent a hard right-hander to his jaw, which dropped him. Very slowly, with obvious pain and difficulty, Burns rose as the eighth second was counted. And Johnson went for him again with all his might. Then the police stopped the fight, and the referee pointed to the new black champion.

Burns was a brave man, and he did the utmost in his power to put up a good fight against a much heavier, stronger, and more skilful boxer than himself. But it should certainly be recorded that he received for his considerable pains and trouble the sum of £6000—which he had bargained for beforehand, " win, lose, or draw," and without the promise of which he would not have undertaken the contest.

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CHAPTER VI

TOMMY BURNS AND JOE BECKETT

In order to dispose of Tommy Burns so far as this book is concerned, it is necessary to break the chronological order of contests and jump twelve years. Between his defeat by Johnson and the encounter to be described now, the records tell us that he engaged in five matches, none of the first importance. Then, in July of 1920, an affair was arranged with Joe Beckett, the Heavy-weight Champion of England. This took place at the Albert Hall, and should be regarded rather as an event than as an athletic contest.

As already suggested, the interest in many widely-advertised glove-fights is spurious: a passion of sensationalism stimulated by the Press. The fight between Beckett and Burns hardly comes under that head, because there is always a genuine interest in watching the return of a veteran, whether that veteran be boxer or prima donna. Burns had been in the hey-day of his fame when Joe Beckett was a young lad. He had been execrated by sportsmen for his trick of "mouth-fighting," for trying to intimidate his antagonists by heaping insult upon injury during the course of a battle; and also for his rank commercialism. He had been one of the first "business boxers" to be seen in England, and we had been rather appalled by the phenomena. Since those days we have grasped the fact that there is a practically negligible correlation between professional sport and sportsmanship, so far at least as boxing goes—especially now that men like Jim Driscoll and Pat O'Keefe (both of whom appeared as seconds in Beckett's and Burns's corners respectively) have retired. It was from Burns that we first learned the dodge of demanding a fixed fee for a contest—so much down, whatever happened. And Burns,

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having through his Press agents arranged to be famous and to be a certain attraction to the multitude, could get pretty well what he asked.

To set against this unpleasing but no doubt justifiable business acumen, Burns was gloriously plucky. And in his fight with Beckett he displayed that merit undiminished. People remember these things; they remember the fame (never in Burns's case entirely undeserved) and the good points quite as readily as the notoriety and the bad ones: so that Burns had a great following at the Albert Hall, and, in despite of his age and condition, his chances against the younger and stronger man were considered good.

I had seen Burns watching several fights during that year, and his appearance did not suggest the hardened pugilist. Even in the ring after training he was much too fat, and he did not box like a young man. He was thirty-nine and looked a good deal more. Yet he remembered a good deal of his boxing. His footwork was still excellent, though he wasted his height by keeping his feet too far apart. His blows, however, were not really hard, except when he made a special effort to knock Beckett out. For punishment the English champion's hitting was much more level and dangerous. But Beckett looked singularly foolish on several occasions: he hooked and he swung and he led, and over and over again his opponent simply wasn't there. Burns's defence was good, and it was youth and strength that beat him. But he deserved to be beaten if only for continued holding and "lying on" his man. "Lying on" consists of resting your head on your antagonist's chest or shoulder, making some pretence at in-fighting, but all the while throwing your weight forward so that you get a good rest, and your opponent holds you up and loses energy in so doing. In a long contest between heavy-weights it is extremely important to save all the strength you can and to make your man do the more work.

Taken as a whole, this contest was full of bad boxing. The referee was continually having to separate the men, and the fault was nearly always Burns's.

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The first two very cautious rounds were Beckett's. In the third Beckett too, held a little: for Burns landed a right high up on the jaw hard enough to make him careful. That round made many people believe that Burns was going to win. In the next round, which was dull and tedious from much holding and clinching, Beckett showed himself most respectful, and covered himself, if not with glory, at all events with his arms. It was soon seen that Burns was beginning to flag, though now and again he made a spurt with what looked like renewed vigour. In the sixth round he was virtually beaten, but he continued to keep his head out of danger and fought on with commendable courage. After about a minute of the seventh round Beckett knocked his man down with a hard right on the point of the jaw. Burns was badly dazed and only rose at the ninth second. He dashed at Beckett and made a despairing effort to knock him out, but he had no strength and no sense of direction. Beckett easily avoided his blows. Burns was really beaten now, and, after he had risen from another knock-down blow, his seconds very wisely threw the towel into the ring as a token of surrender—much to their principal's indignation. The seconds were fully justified, for unnecessary punishment to a man of Burns's age and condition may be more serious than it looks.

The public, who make contests of this kind possible, do not sufficiently realise in what way they directly affect the future of boxing in England. The majority of onlookers at a big show have only the haziest notion of what good boxing is. They are bored by too much clinching, but, determined to get some of their money's worth, they would be still more bored, if, after due warning, the referee disqualified a man, or, the fault being equal, ordered both men out of the ring. A strong referee, with the best interests of the sport at heart, does this. It seldom pays the promoters of big show contests to appoint strong referees.

This fight between Burns and Beckett was clean in comparison with many others, and is described here because it was between two very well-known men and because it typifies the futility of the return to active service of long retired veterans who are not

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in good condition. Also it was typical of the modern show-boxing of which, since the war, there has been so much.

The only thought in the mind of either man was a knock-out. Men who stand up and hit straight with exceptional skill (like Jem Driscoll) also think of a knock-out, but only as a fortunate termination to a well-laid scheme and lengthy preparation. They wear their men down by real boxing and then seize an opportunity. Men like Joe Beckett, on the other hand, not being really good boxers, aim for a knock-out all the time, and hit straight once in a blue moon. It is true that in fighting Burns, Beckett wore his man down until he failed to stop a finishing blow, but it was the finishing blow that he was trying for all the time. Burns, on the other hand, in persistently trying for a knock-out, was perfectly right; because, though a better boxer than Beckett, he hadn't the strength to meet a young man on his own ground. He must have known that he couldn't last very long, and that he must dedicate his superior skill to the landing of a knock-out blow before he was too tired. His superior skill was not enough, and so when he got into danger he helped himself and hindered Beckett (though not for long) by holding. In doing that he was breaking a cardinal rule.

But it is the sentimental or dramatic element in boxing—quite a real one—which draws the closest attention of the crowd. So long as a fight is comparatively fair and one of the men is well-remembered as having caused much excitement ten years or more ago, what more can be needed? The veteran wins, or the veteran is beaten. In either case he is under the white glare of light put up on behalf of the cinematograph operators. The crowd, unless its money is upon the issue, don't much mind what happens, who wins, provided they get their money's worth of excitement.

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CHAPTER VII

JACK JOHNSON AND JAMES J. JEFFERIES

JOHNSON'S victory over Burns in 1908 created, if we are to be judged by our newspapers, both in England and America, a sort of absurd terror. A black man was champion, and no white man could be found capable of beating him. Of course, the enmity that he inspired was very largely Johnson's own fault. His conduct was outrageous, and, worst of all, he had a white wife. If he had behaved as Peter Jackson did there would have been much less trouble. As it was, one man after another was tried with a view to training a "White Hope," as it was said, and no new man could be found anywhere who would stand the least chance of beating the negro.

At last, nearly two years later, the old champion, James Jefferies consented (after, we may be sure, some prodigious bargaining) to fight Johnson, and the match was arranged to take place at Reno, in the state of Nevada, on July 4th, 1910. Before the fight he is said to have bragged that no living man was capable of knocking him down for ten seconds. But boasts of that kind should always be discounted. They mean very little. If said at all, they are said for print in the hope that they may have a depressing effect upon the opposing camp. It is unlikely that Jefferies really believed what he said.

Once again some doubt was felt whether the black would have a fair chance of winning, but if any plans ever were made to "get at" him or to break the ring, they were frustrated. The greatest doubt of all in the minds of the public, both in England and America, was whether Johnson would be heavily paid to let Jefferies knock him out. And that doubt was set at rest by Johnson himself, who, in an "interview," which was obviously

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sincere, explained that he could get all the money he wanted by fighting straight, and that his one ambition was to thrash any white man pitted against him so that the "white race should kow-tow" to him.

The men were fairly well matched, though some doubt was expressed as to Jefferies's health. There is no doubt that they trained well, though again the white man certainly had superfluous flesh on him. He weighed 16 stone 4 lb. against Johnson's 15 stone 2 lb. Their height was much the same, but Jefferies's enormous chest made Johnson look narrow. Jefferies's greatest handicap lay in the fact that he had retired six years before and had not fought since. His retirement had been genuine. He had no desire to fight again. But he was badgered and worried and importuned: it was "put to him as a white man." And as a white man he nobly agreed to fight the black, but—that was not the only consideration. The purse was one of 101,000 dollars.

Now Jefferies had never been either very quick or very skilful, but he had never been beaten. He had won all his many fights in the past by his strength. He knew that he was now matched against a very good man, but he really expected as well as hoped to win. Good judges of boxing shared the hope, but not the expectation. The return of a veteran always fills every one but the most sanguine of his supporters with misgivings.

The crowd about the ring was enormous—women, cowboys, poor men, rich men, yellow, red, and black men. The grand stand alone held 18,000 people. It was announced by the doctor officially appointed for the occasion that Johnson was upon the brink of nervous collapse. But a few minutes later when he entered the ring he certainly appeared to be well and confident.

Nothing of any interest occurred in the first round. Both men were desperately cautious. Jefferies crouched with his head sunk between his huge shoulders, whilst the black stood up straight, a magnificent figure of a man, his left hand up and out, his right diagonally thrown across his chest in the conventional

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manner, his knees very slightly bent. He was perfectly poised, his weight equally shared by both legs. The crouching attitude has its advantages, but amongst the several points against it is the fact that it is unnecessarily fatiguing. So the men circled round each other, hitting tentatively now and again, to see whether the other was on the alert and quick to guard, not letting go, risking nothing. And in the second round also both exercised the extremest care. Once Jefferies hit out with all his might and missed Johnson by inches as he side-stepped. And the black laughed at his failure. An equal round.

But Johnson got seriously to work in the third round, sent in a hard right-hander to the head, and during a clinch put in two upper-cuts which, however, appeared to do no damage. Jefferies smiled and kept perfectly cool. It would not have been worth while smiling unless he had been hurt just a little. He was boxing well. Oddly enough, despite his long inactivity, many of the spectators observed that he had never boxed better. There were very hard exchanges in the next round, Johnson landing on the ear, Jefferies drawing blood from the mouth. Indeed the white man landed again and again, but he was not the man who had knocked out Bob Fitzsimmons. He did not hit nearly so hard. It is quite likely that his actual boxing was all the better for a long rest and then careful training with many different sparring partners: but hard hitting must be practised constantly, and moreover, it is a virtue which to a less degree than the science of boxing, follows the general trend of a man's health: and Jefferies had not the constitution he once had. The fifth and sixth rounds consisted mostly of clinching, but at the end of the latter Johnson opened up an old wound on Jefferies's eyebrow which bled so severely that the blood streamed down his face, and his eye began to close at once. The next round was certainly Johnson's. A vicious right swing on the side of the head staggered the white man, who was already beginning to lose what little speed he had. Weeks of severe training are made of no avail in an amazingly small number of minutes of hard fighting. Jefferies was hurt, and his way of boxing now showed

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Photo: "Sport and General."

Jem Driscoll.

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the onlookers that he was hurt. Johnson, meanwhile, was perfectly cool and boxing easily and well. There were to be no tricks this time, no cruelty of keeping an opponent on his legs so as to hurt him. Jefferies was a harder man than Burns, and Johnson would not take the smallest risk. Was he not "out" to humiliate the whole white race? Had he not said so, and was he not doing it? Of course, to those two men and to ninety per cent. of the onlookers this contest was, as it were, a life and death affair, as important as a minor war. I don't suppose that it occurred to any one of them that boxing is, when all's said, a sport, a sort of game, a method of exercise for spare time. Certainly the men were being very highly paid for their "game," but did that fact alter the essential littleness of the whole thing? No: it was perceived to be a desperate encounter between the white races and the black, and nothing less portentous at all.

And Jefferies tried again and again to batter his way through Johnson's guard and failed. He feinted and hit, but he was too slow; and each time his glove went out with all his power behind it, the black ducked or side-stepped, getting away from danger with an agility which was astonishing in so big a man. And Jefferies knew now that he could not beat him. He was desperate, and made mad-bull rushes without avail. In the tenth round one eye was so swollen that he could not see from it, and Johnson hit him again and again. A man less strong would have been knocked out long before. Jefferies went slowly and painfully to his corner at the end of the eleventh round, his great chest convulsed with his hard breathing, his face haggard. He tried his best, but he was now hopelessly weak, and by now he had lost a good deal of blood. He was terribly punished in the thirteenth round, but he took his gruel without flinching. Three hard blows sent him staggering just before time was called. And Johnson was still fresh and strong, boxing calmly and well. The fifteenth round was the last. Jefferies staggered up from his corner and Johnson went straight up to him and knocked him down with a long straight left. Very slowly, very painfully, Jefferies rose, only getting to his feet at the tenth second. Then the black hit

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him again, and again he went down. This time he was utterly dazed. With all the will in the world he couldn't rise in time; and the ten seconds were gone at the moment when he, after a dreadful struggle, had risen to his knees.

It wasn't until April of 1915, that Jack Johnson ceased to be Champion of the World. He was then knocked out at Havana by Jess Willard (who stood 6 feet 6 inches and weighed 17 stone) in twenty-six rounds. No interest whatever was taken in this contest in England for, bearing the date in mind, obvious reasons. Also, the encounter was not seriously considered on sporting grounds. Willard was subsequently beaten very easily by Dempsey in three rounds.

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CHAPTER VIII

GEORGES CARPENTIER AND BOMBARDIER WELLS

BOMBARDIER WELLS has a most peculiar record. The chart of his successes and failures is like conventionalised lightning. He began with success and then failed miserably: then up again to the top of the tree and down again to the bottom of the ladder. His career, his temperament, the state of his nerves, have been more widely and more portentously discussed than the weight of Tom Sayers, the muscle of Tom Cribb, or the reach of Peter Jackson.

One school maintains that Wells is a first-rate boxer, another that he is a bad boxer. It all depends upon what you mean by boxing. If boxing is a game as golf is a game, an almost theoretical attack and defence, the rudest expression of which is what we call an "Exhibition"—then Wells is a first-rater. But if boxing is the translation into rude and rough sport of a quite practical defence and offence, whereby one man disables another (but confined within rules which are unlikely to be obeyed in a very serious affair, any more than the Geneva Convention is obeyed in very serious wars)—if, within these rules boxing means the real conflict between two men whose strength and endurance as well as skill are supremely tested—then Wells is, on the whole, a bad boxer.

The explanation of Wells is extremely simple: he is a scientific boxer who does not really like fighting.

When we talk of a "natural fighter" we mean a man who, however good-natured—and good nature has nothing to do with it—enjoys bashing people and is willing to run the risk of being bashed. He may be skilful too, though that is beside the point. Wells has been called a coward—which is frankly absurd. He has never provided any evidence of cowardice. He does, no doubt,

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"know the meaning of fear": the bravest men always do. The "man who does not know what fear is" clearly is a very useful man indeed, but he is not so brave as the man who knows all about it, is indeed afraid, but keeps his fear in hand. In this sort of discussion too sharp a line is usually drawn between brave men and cowards: too sharp a line is usually drawn in any discussion about primitive qualities. I don't suppose that Wells enjoys being hurt any more than I do, but his difficulty lies in the fact, that he gets no enjoyment from hurting—or, let us say rather, winning physical domination over—other people. A boxer to be a good boxer must have the instinct for bashing. This may not be a highly civilised instinct, it may (for all I know) be highly reprehensible, but it is present in successful pugilists, and they can't get on without it.

Wells was born in 1889, and as a soldier and amateur won the Championship of all India by beating Private Clohessey in 1909. Two years later he won the English Heavy-weight Championship by knocking out Iron Hague at the National Sporting Club in six rounds. Wells was one of the names mentioned as a "White Hope" at the time when England, Australia, and America were being ransacked for a champion to beat Johnson. The match was actually arranged, but it was very wisely stopped by order of the Home Office. There was, as already said, a great deal too much "feeling" associated with the proposed contest which had nothing at all to do with the sport of boxing. It is impossible to say how any fight that never took place would have gone, and retrospective surmise is fairly unprofitable: but so far as we can judge from the two men's respective records, there seems to be no doubt that Johnson would have won quickly and with the utmost ease.

The two most interesting encounters in Wells's career were those with Georges Carpentier. The Frenchman's record will be described in more detail later: it is enough to say for the present that he was the first French boxer of the highest order, the first to make us realise that boxing was not the sole prerogative of the English-speaking races.

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Photo: "Sport and General."

Jimmy Wilde.

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The first encounter took place at the Ghent Exhibition, on June 1st, 1913. Wells stands 6 feet 3 inches, and his weight is generally in the neighbourhood of 13 stone. Carpentier is half an inch under six feet, and in those days was probably little more than a middle-weight, if that. On this occasion he fought, if not at home, at least near home: and there was a big crowd present of colliers from Lens, just over the border, amongst whom he had been born and bred.

Natural advantage was with the Bombardier. Three and a half inches is a great "pull" in height, and he had a corresponding superiority in reach. So it was plain to Carpentier and his advisers that he must do his utmost to get close to his man and to keep there. Wells, on the other hand, under-rated his opponent. Like most Englishmen at the time he could not understand how a Frenchman could be a real boxer. It seemed to be against the settled order of nature.

Now Wells was weak in the body, and he knew it. He could see that Carpentier was strong, and soon found him a hard hitter, and as he kept on attacking the body, the Englishman propped him off with long straight lefts. And for a time he kept at a distance, and Carpentier, misjudging the extra reach of his opponent lowered his guard. Then Wells sent in a hard blow at long range and all but beat him. A hard blow, perfectly timed, but not quite hard enough. Carpentier tumbled forward and remained down for nine seconds. But Carpentier really loves fighting for fighting's sake, or did then. He had been all but knocked out, but he had in a superlative degree the will-to-go-on. And Wells, as had happened before, as happened afterwards too, failed to follow up his advantage with hot but reasoned haste. Having put in a good blow he was always rather prone to stand aside, so to speak, and admire its effects; thus allowing those effects to pass off. So it was now. It is true that he had decidedly the better of the second round, leading off with a splendid strong and long straight left: but he failed to bustle and worry Carpentier, and the Frenchman, as the very seconds went by, recovered. And in the third round Carpentier was himself again. Wells was

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utterly astonished. He had quite forgotten that the stunning force of a punch on the jaw passes very quickly: and he allowed himself to be flustered and confused, and he showed plainly that he was puzzled. He forgot to box and hit wildly and wide of his mark. And now Carpentier had got back nearly all the strength that had been beaten out of him in the first round. He sent in a vicious right to the jaw which shook Wells. When a blow on the "point" has done damage short of knocking a man down, he generally gives the fact away by an involuntary tapping of his right foot upon the floor. It is like a strong electric shock which, communicated first to the brain, runs instantly through the whole nervous system. So the spectators could see that Wells had been more than "touched." And then the fourth round began and Wells was careless and in his turn lowered his guard: and Carpentier's right hand whipped across over the shoulder to the English champion's jaw, whilst an instant later his left came, bent, with his weight behind it, to the stomach. And—that was all. Wells was counted out, and, as well they might, the colliers from Lens wildly yelled their triumph.

This encounter, pricking as it did the bubble of an age-old tradition, yet had very little effect on the admirers of the Bombardier. Or rather it was, perhaps, that they refused to believe that the Champion of England (however little that title may mean) could be really beaten by any one across the Channel. They regarded the final knock-out as an accident. After all, Wells had all but won at the very outset, and for some inscrutable reason he had given the fight away, first by lack of energy and then from sheer carelessness. This would surely have taught him a lesson?

There followed after the affair at Ghent three contests in which Wells proved eminently successful. He knocked out Packey Mahoney in thirteen rounds at the National Sporting Club, after receiving early in the fight two very hard right-handers in the body which made him visibly squirm. That was one of Wells's chief defects—he showed when he was hurt. But it was interesting to be shown that, because it was not supposed

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that he could stand two such blows on the body. Yet he recovered from them gradually and did not, this time, forget his boxing.

The next fight was a very unequal affair with Pat O'Keefe, Middle-weight Champion of England, and subsequently winner outright of the Lonsdale Belt. O'Keefe was a fine, fair boxer, but he was giving a couple of stone, and Wells's head was right over him. He boxed with the utmost pluck and gave the heavy-weight a lot of trouble before finally he was quite worn out and sent down beaten in the fifteenth round.

Then Wells knocked out Gunner Moir quite easily in five rounds, thus turning the tables, for Moir had knocked out the Bombardier more by good luck than by sound judgment two years before.

And then at last on December 5th, 1913, six months after his defeat at Ghent, the return match with Carpentier was arranged and took place at the National Sporting Club.

Of course, if you regard sport only from a competitive standpoint, this affair will seem to you a sheer disaster. It was England against France, and France decisively won. It is only human nature, I suppose, which sticks the national labels so prominently on to an event of this kind, but it seems unnecessary and rather a pity. There was really no England and no France in the matter, but two boxers called respectively Carpentier and Wells, who met in a roped ring to hit each other with padded fists for the ludicrously excessive stakes of £300 a side and a purse of £3000. And now that we are more used to the idea of Frenchmen boxing than we were in those days, the international habit of thought has largely, and fortunately, dropped into the background of our minds.

It is worth mentioning that members at the National Sporting Club that night paid for their guests' seats five, ten, and as many as fifteen guineas. One onlooker, just before the men entered the ring for the big contest of the evening, left the hall.

" I'll be back presently," he said to a friend, " when they've

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settled down. I don't want to see all the preliminaries and hand-shaking." So he left his fifteen-guinea seat and went into another part of the club. On his return he found that it was all over. Rather an expensive drink, in fact.

The contest had lasted precisely seventy-three seconds.

It was a dismal affair, and brief as the test was there was no possible doubt but that Carpentier was Wells's master. Both the men were extremely well-trained. Wells was in excellent health and could make no excuse on that score. At the very outset the Frenchman went straight for his man and planted a good left at his body before he knew the round had begun. Then he came in close and vigorously attacked him with a succession of short half-arm blows. He danced away for a moment and was at Wells again. The Englishman was entirely flabbergasted. His presence of mind was all gone. He sank his left in a futile attempt to guard his body, but Carpentier's right was past it in a flash, whilst his left followed instantly to Wells's nose. Wells tucked away his stomach and took a step back. Carpentier reached the body again, nevertheless; and as they went apart for a moment it was seen that Wells was stupefied—more by the very speed of the onslaught, spectators said, than by punishment. Which is as may be. Carpentier hit to hurt, and it is exceedingly unlikely that he failed. But it was again the science of boxing which deserted Wells. He seemed to be paralysed. He did nothing: no long left came out to keep the Frenchman away. He wouldn't be kept away. A great lot of nonsense has been talked about his actual hypnotic power or that of his ebullient manager, M. Descamps. But the reason why Carpentier won victories in those days and has won others and greater ones since, is simply that he is an extremely good boxer with any amount of fighting spirit—the love of fighting, the sheer intention to win. That form of will-power does communicate itself to an opponent in the ring and with disastrous results, if he be a man of less vitality.

Then Carpentier moved forward again and swung left followed by right hard upon Wells's jaw. Then left and right at the body.

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Both blows landed on the mark—and it was all over. Wells reeled for an instant and then sank forward. At the call of Four he rolled over on to his back. He tried to draw up his knees, but he was completely knocked out, paralysed, and done. And—for those who like the national labels—the Champion of England lay beaten at the feet of the Champion of France, without having struck a single blow.

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CHAPTER IX

JOE BECKETT AND BOMBARDIER WELLS

At the time of writing this chapter, Joe Beckett is the Heavy-weight Champion of England, and has been ever since the contest described below when, on February 27th, 1919, he first met Bombardier Wells. He is not a very good champion. His skill is not of the first order, and he has neither the height nor weight to supply his deficiencies. Carpentier disposed of him in a round, because Carpentier is incomparably the better boxer. Wells is also a better boxer so far as skill—one might almost say "mere" skill—goes, but as some one said of him once, "He's too bally refined," which is a better description of the Bombardier than most loose generalisations. He is too bally (and I might dare also to add—"blinking") refined, both in his style of boxing and in his appearance. The old-time pug-faced bruiser is dying out, not only because men no longer fight with their bare knuckles, but because their skill is so much greater in defence than it used to be, that a broken nose is a comparatively rare accident; and modern surgery can make a job of the worst battered faces. Your opponent aims chiefly for those places which are most susceptible to temporary but overwhelming effect—the jaw and the mark. The most terrific blows on either spot do not produce disfigurement. What is known as a "thick ear" is common enough still—many amateurs have it: but Wells has managed to avoid even that. His profile might easily be called Greek—at all events by some one who had once seen a photograph of Praxitéles' Hermes and had rather forgotten it. Even Carpentier, whose personal appearance is discussed much as a good-looking actor's, and by the same sort of people, looks, at close quarters, more of a bruiser than does Wells.

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Punch chose to be amusing on this subject not long before the war, satirising the old and new methods of the manner in which celebrities of the ring were photographed. In one drawing you see the old bruiser, a doughty ruffian, stripped to the waist, with a flattened nose, beetle-browed, with a long aggressive chin, piggy eyes and short-cropped hair; in the other you have a smiling young man dressed in the last palpitating extremity of fashion, with longish hair brushed back from a somewhat noble brow, whilst beside him a beautiful young woman smiles into a baby's cot. The source of Mr. Punch's inspiration was not far to seek.

In the old days a boxer was portrayed at his job just as actors and actresses were, because his job it was that interested people. And like actors and actresses he is still photographed at his job. But to-day just as you will see in the illustrated papers photographs of theatrical people playing quite irrelevant games of golf or making hay which has nothing to do with the point, so you will see photographs of feather-weight champions dandling purely inapposite infants. It is an age when people like to assure themselves (for some inscrutable reason) that show-people are just exactly like people who are not on show.

For good or for ill, boxing has become more and more a matter of exact science in which the quick use of brains has, to some extent, superseded purely physical qualities. And a new type of professional boxer has therefore been evolved. Nevertheless, it is worth observing here that the most important quality of all for success in the ring remains unchanged from the very dawn of fist-fighting, a quality possessed by Tom Johnson, by Jem Belcher, by Tom Spring, Sayers, Fitzsimmons, Carpentier—what we call "character."

Now Joe Beckett (to continue for a moment this unseemly discussion of other men's personal appearance) is in the old tradition of English champions. He "looks a bruiser." This is largely due, no doubt, to much rough and tumble fighting in his youth, when he travelled with a booth, which is still (as it has been in the past) a first-rate school for a hardy young bruiser. In this way he won a great many contests, which have never been

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recorded, and then began a regular career of no particular distinction in 1914. In the following year he retired after fighting Pat O'Keefe for eight rounds. In 1917 he was knocked out also in eight rounds by Frank Goddard, on whom, however, he had his revenge in two rounds two years later. He lost on points to Dick Smith, who was once a policeman and amateur champion, after a contest of twenty rounds. Indeed the people who beat Beckett were better known and better boxers than the people whom he beat. But all this time he was improving as a boxer and getting fitter and stronger.

When he entered the ring at the Holborn Stadium with Bombardier Wells he was, as they say, a picture. He was in perfect, buoyant health; a mass of loose, easy, supple muscle slid and rolled under his bronzed and shining skin, he was obviously eager and ready for a good fight.

Wells led off with his academic straight left, and landed lightly. Joe Beckett dodged the next blow, came close in and sent in a hot right-hander with a bent and vigorous arm to the body. Wells doubled up and went down. On his rising Beckett went for him again, put another right on the body and followed it quickly with a severe punch rather high on the jaw which knocked Wells down again for a count of nine. Beckett ought to have beaten him then, but Wells boxed with great pluck and covered himself with care. During the rest of that round he never took another blow, and, after a rest, came up for the second fully recovered. Beckett rushed at him clumsily, trying to get close, and Wells used his long reach with much skill and promptitude, propping him off, hitting him with his clean and sure straight left, moving quickly on his feet, so that, try as he would, Beckett failed to come to close quarters. Just at the end of the round Wells gave his man a really hard blow on the chin which made Beckett exceedingly glad to hear the bell which announced time, And in the third round, too, Wells kept his opponent at a distance, boxing brilliantly, and adding up points in his own favour. In the fourth Wells was really happy. He had suppressed Beckett, he thought; and sent a hard right-hander to the jaw which would

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Photo: "*Sport and General.*"

Bombardier Wells.

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have staggered less hard a man. But Beckett is very strong, and replied with a couple of body-blows, without, however, doing any damage to speak of. Again it was Wells's round. He had quite forgotten the beginning of the fight and how nearly he had been beaten then. He was acutely conscious of being the better boxer, and consequently underrated Beckett's strength and persistence. At the start of the fifth round he was not prepared for the rush with which his antagonist came for him, so that Beckett got quite close to him before he could think about propping him away. Right and left came Beckett's gloves with a will into Wells's slim body, and then a short jolting blow went upwards to his jaw, and Wells went down. He was up again very quickly, not seriously hurt, and Beckett darted in again. This time Wells was ready and did his utmost to use his long reach. But Beckett's greater strength and his willingness to run a little risk told in his favour. He was fighting hard, but not wildly or foolishly; he ducked under the long arm and began to punish Wells severely about the body. Another blow on the head sent Wells to the ground for nine seconds. Wells rose feeling dazed and helpless, he tried to cover his jaw, but Beckett darted in and sent in a hard right over his shoulder to the point, and Wells was knocked out. And the Championship of England again changed hands.

A return match was arranged a year later, and on May 20th, 1920, this pair fought again for the Championship at Olympia. Beckett in the meantime had been summarily knocked out by Carpentier, but had himself knocked out Frank Goddard in two rounds, Eddie McGoorty in seventeen, and Dick Smith in five. He had become more confident, more adept. He was not a great boxer, is not now, and is never likely to be. But he had improved. Nor had Wells been idle. He had knocked out Jack Curphey in two rounds, Harry Reeves in four, Paul Journee, the Frenchman, in thirteen, and Eddie McGoorty in sixteen. This last was a terrific fight, but McGoorty was quite out of training. Wells had also beaten Arthur Townley, who retired at the end of the ninth round.

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What I might call the cochranisation of boxing has now for some time past enabled vast crowds of people to watch, in comfort, altogether too great a number of championship fights. The popular excitement about these contests, or the majority of them, is largely artificial—almost as artificial as the reputations of the "champions" themselves, the result, that is to say, of purely commercial advertisement. Of course, the case of Bombardier Wells is singular. Long ago, before the war, he had his hold upon the popular imagination (if such a thing exists), because he was tall, and good-looking, and "temperamental."

As for his methods, a friend of mine who used to judge Army Competitions in India, and who saw the All India Championship of 1909, used to say that he never knew a boxer who so persistently stuck to the plan of campaign that he had previously thought out as did Bombardier Wells. Perhaps that is the secret of his mercurial career: perhaps he always has a plan of campaign and sticks to it—successfully or not, according to the plan of his antagonist. Wells's antagonists have a disconcerting way of doing something fresh and unexpected, and the plan is liable to be a hindrance. The most crafty boxer may have a plan which he prefers, but he is able at an instant's notice to substitute an alternative scheme suited especially to the caprice of the man he desires to beat. Carpentier does that. Wells, as already said, likes scientific boxing just as other people like golf, and he is apt to be disconcerted by fierce sloggers just as a golfer would be disconcerted (I imagine) by some one who invented and employed some explosive device for driving little white balls much farther away than can be done with the implements at present in use. Circumstances or the advice of friends pushed Wells—in the first instance possibly without any special desire of his own—into the professional ring. And people still flock to see him there, or at all events they did so in 1920, chiefly because the ring was, for him, so strikingly inappropriate a setting.

Beckett, on the other hand, takes naturally to fighting. He is not nearly such a "good boxer," his style is not so finished as Wells's, his footwork, though variable, is not so adept. But he

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knows how to smash people, and I should say (intending no libel upon a gallant as well as a successful bruiser) likes doing it.

The majority of people who came to Olympia to watch the second fight between those men probably wanted Wells to win, for the inadequate reason that he looked so much less like a boxer than his adversary. They were disappointed. Wells began better than usual, for he seemed ready to fight: but his own science was at fault in that he accepted Beckett's invitation to bouts of in-fighting, when he ought to have done his utmost to keep his man at long range. Beckett accepted the situation comfortably, and sent in some hard punches to the body and a left swing to the head. During the last minute of the round Wells did succeed in keeping him away and landed a succession of fine straight lefts; but these were not hard blows, nor did Wells attempt to follow them up. Joe Beckett was imperturbable and dogged, but very cautious too. He kept his left shoulder well up to protect his jaw from Wells's right, and when he did hit he hit hard. There was no sting, no spring, no potency in Wells's hitting. And he was careless. He gave Beckett an excellent opening in the second round, which the new champion used admirably with a hooked left, sending Wells down for seven seconds. And he kept on pushing his way in for the rest of that round, once leaving himself unguarded in his turn and inviting the blow with which Wells, if he had put his weight into it, might well have knocked him out. But the blow was too high and not hard enough. The third round was the last. Beckett gave his man a hard left, and Wells broke ground, somewhat staggered. They came together and for half a minute or more there was a really fine rally, Beckett hit the harder all the time, and presently with a swinging left to the body and a beautifully clean and true right hook to the jaw he knocked Wells out.

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CHAPTER X

GEORGES CARPENTIER AND JEFF SMITH

If an unnecessary fuss has been made about those affairs of other boxers which have nothing whatever to do with boxing, there is some excuse in Carpentier's case, if only because he is the first Frenchman to achieve real distinction in the sport.

Georges Carpentier was born at Lens, in the Pas de Calais, in January of 1894. His father was a collier, and the boy, directly he was old enough (which probably meant long before he was old enough), followed his father underground and worked as a pit-boy, earning his five francs a week. At about this time a jovial little man whose face is now as familiar as Carpentier's, François Descamps by name, was managing a gymnasium in the town. It was at this time that a wave of athleticism was passing over Northern France, and the boys of Lens, Carpentier amongst them, used to regard this gymnasium as their chief amusement after work hours. Amongst other exercises, Descamps encouraged a certain amount of boxing—" English " boxing. *La Savate* had practically died out, and the days when " Charlemagne " the Frenchman, " kicked out " Jerry Driscoll, the ex-sailor (amongst whose pupils have been some of the best of the English amateurs) were unlikely to return. Still, though boxing was at this time a popular enough show in Paris, few Frenchmen themselves actually boxed, and Descamps was, in providing gloves at his gymnasium, rather in advance of his time.

Descamps forbade the use of these gloves by boys whom he had not yet taught, and when one evening he caught young Carpentier thrashing a much bigger boy with them and by the light of nature, he rated him soundly: but he kept an eye on him. He was a natural fighter. It soon became apparent that he

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Photo: "Sport and General."

Joe Beckett.

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must fight; the inward urging was there, insistent and never for long to be denied. And the boy, all untaught, could defend himself.

Before very long Descamps, who interviewed the child's parents, overcame their natural scepticism by paying them the weekly five francs the lad had been earning at the mine, and undertook his training as an athlete, sending him out into the fresh air instead of into the pit, teaching him all he himself knew about the science of fisticuffs. Mr. F. H. Lucas, the author of *From Pit-Boy to Champion Boxer*, makes it plain that if ever there was an authentic instance of a fairy godfather stepping into a boy's life and changing it in a day from gloom to unalloyed delight, it is the instance of Descamps and Carpentier. The young Frenchman had an unique opportunity of succeeding well, for he was by Descamps's interference enabled to follow the pursuit he liked best from his boyhood onwards; and underwent, owing to that fact, a unique training, adapted as it was to that end and to that end alone.

It is unnecessary to trace Carpentier's career from the time he won his first success against an American boxer in a travelling booth and became "Champion" of France at 7 stone 2 lb., and at the age of fourteen, until he beat the Heavy-weight Champion of England, when he was but nineteen and no more than a middle-weight.

Carpentier's success was by no means uniform. He got some severe thrashings both from English boxers and Frenchmen—generally owing to the fact that he gave away weight and especially years at an age when youth is on the windward side of achievement. It is a wonder that the boy was not discouraged, but his pluck was unconquerable, and Descamps a sympathetic and astute manager. Again and again when it became apparent in a contest that nothing could save Carpentier from a knock-out, Descamps would give in for him, directing one of the seconds to throw a towel into the ring. His avoidance of the actual fact of a knock-out no doubt saved the boy much discouragement, and it looked better, and still looks better, in a formal printed record of what

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he has done. Of course, Descamps was not always able to gauge the right moment for surrender, and it happened at least once in those early days that Carpentier was knocked out just like any other boxer with no fairy godfather to supervise his defeats.

In 1912 he had a very hard fight with Frank Klaus the American, who at that time claimed the World's Middle-weight Championship. This encounter took place at Dieppe, and the American was nearly beaten early in the fight, falling from a terrific blow on the jaw. But he recovered, and his much longer experience came to his aid. In the end he gave Carpentier a severe drubbing for several rounds until, to save him, Descamps entered the ring: whereupon the referee gave Klaus the verdict. But throughout this contest the Frenchman was working hard, fighting all the time, never discouraged by punishment, showing what he had always shown, a perfectly unalterable, irreducible courage.

The same sort of thing happened in his fight with another American, Papke. This time Carpentier had to reduce his weight, which is the worst possible thing a boy, still growing and with no superfluous flesh, can do. He began the fight weak, was severely hammered and finally had an eye closed. Again Descamps intervened, this time in the eighteenth round, to save him the technical knock-out.

Regarded dispassionately, this sort of thing is excellent "business," and does not, as far as one can see, do much harm to sport. If Tommy Burns was the first man who made boxing a matter of sound commerce, one may call Carpentier, or more strictly his manager and mentor, Descamps, the first Boxing Business Magnate. Between them they had made a literally large fortune before Carpentier was twenty.

One of his hardest, longest, and best fights was with Jeff Smith, a hardy American who was a shade lighter, shorter, and with less reach than Carpentier. This combat took place at the end of 1913, not a month after the Frenchman had beaten Wells, for the second time, at the National Sporting Club.

On this occasion Carpentier boxed indifferently in the early

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rounds, and seemed not to take the occasion seriously. His was the first blow, and it was a good one, which drew blood from the American's nose. Smith grunted and shook his head, and put in a left in reply. It was clear that he wanted the Frenchman at close quarters, and he kept coming in close and hammering away at the body. Carpentier made a perfunctory effort to keep him at arm's length, but seemed after a while to be willing to fight Smith on his own terms. He caught the American a very hard smack on the eye, which swelled up so that he was thenceforward half-blinded. Smith even in the third round was a good deal marked, and not one of the spectators imagined for a moment that he could possibly last out the full twenty rounds. In the next round Carpentier boxed very much as he pleased. They exchanged body-blow and upper-cut on the head, but the latter was the more severe, and it was the Frenchman's. Smith kept on trying to " bring the right across " at close quarters, but Carpentier always protected himself. He seemed to be waiting for a safe opportunity for knocking his opponent out, and did little in the fourth round. Smith kept on leading, though without much effect, but scored more points nevertheless.

After a while Smith began to get into serious trouble, and he held to avoid punishment. This is against the strict rules, and should be regarded as such; but, humanly speaking, when you are getting a very bad time, the instinct to hold your man's arms to prevent him from hitting you is very strong. If you have the strength it is, of course, much more efficacious to hit him and stop the punishment in that way: but when your strength is going, as Smith's was, you are prone to follow blind instinct, rules or no rules. Just after this he managed to put in a good upper-cut, but got a hard " one-two " in return—a left instantly followed by right, straight, taking him in the middle of the face. And then Smith woke up, having got what is called his second wind. Throughout the seventh round he gave Carpentier a really bad time. Two fierce blows, left and right, made the Frenchman rock where he stood, and his counters were well guarded or avoided altogether. Carpentier boxed better in the eighth round, but

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there was no power in his blows, and the French onlookers began to look very glum. For his part, Carpentier wished that he had trained better. He was not himself: the fire seemed to be dead in him. He was feeling desperate: there was no pleasure in this fight. Smith kept on getting under his long arms and hitting him hard at close quarters, hammering away at his stomach. And Carpentier grew weaker and more wild, and wasted his remaining strength on futile swings which clove the empty air. Another hard blow on the jaw and Carpentier staggered. It was all he could do to hold up. He replied with one of his vain and foolish swings, sent with all his remaining power whizzing through the air and missing Jeff Smith by feet. This effort sent Carpentier hard to the floor by the momentum of its own wasted force. It is true that Smith failed to follow up his advantage when the Frenchman rose, but even so the round was decisively in his favour.

The tenth round found Smith strong and hearty, boxing with sturdy vigour if not remarkable skill. Carpentier had recovered a little by now, and, exasperated by Smith's coolness, rallied vigorously and rained left-handers on his opponent, so that the American was forced to "cover up" with his gloves on either side of his face and his elbows tucked in. Carpentier's round, but no serious damage done. And the next was much the same, and Smith clinched a good deal, though Carpentier's hitting was far from strong. Smith's defence was admirable when he was not holding, but his vigour of attack had been in abeyance for a little while. In the twelfth round he woke up, and drove his right to the Frenchman's mouth, drawing much blood, and went on attacking. In the fourteenth round Carpentier seemed quite done. He tried once or twice to swing in the hope of knocking his man out, but his blows were weak and Smith was cautious. The American was still the more marked and obviously damaged of the two; but Carpentier looked woebegone and ill. He, too, had a split lip which bled profusely. Just at the end of the round Carpentier did at last manage to put in a right cross-counter which had some strength in it, but before he could follow it up time was called, and Smith had his minute in which to recover.

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It was about this time that Descamps declared that Carpentier had smashed his hand at the very beginning of the fight. It may be taken as a fairly safe rule that when a man's backers make this type of observation during the progress of a contest, they think he is going to lose it. When he has actually lost, they invariably say something of the kind. A smashed hand—a family trouble—an acute attack of indigestion—these excuses and all their manifold variations serve their dear old turn, and are promptly disbelieved at large as soon as they are uttered. It is possible that Carpentier may have sprained a thumb slightly, but it could not have been more than that. The vigour that his hitting lacked was, on that occasion, constitutional. He was not in first-rate condition.

Both men were sorry for themselves. Smith's eye was quite closed, his opponent was bleeding severely from his cut lip. For a time their efforts were about equal. Carpentier kept trying to knock his man out, Smith defended himself. The spectators could not understand the Frenchman. All the time or almost all the time, he had fought like a man both weak and desperate. And then, quite suddenly, in the sixteenth round there was a change.

I have said that Carpentier is a real fighter: he has the spirit and instinct for bashing, for going on against odds. He was weak, and for a long time he had plainly shown it. And yet somewhere in him there was a reserve of power and an unconquerable will.

To the utter astonishment of the onlookers and of Jeff Smith himself, Carpentier sprang out of his corner for the sixteenth round as though he were beginning a fresh contest. He positively hurled himself across the ring at his antagonist. He landed at once, with a half-arm blow on the head, and blow after blow, mainly with the left, pounded the unfortunate American. Smith was completely taken aback and could only clinch to save himself. It was all that he could do to withstand this slaughtering attack and remain upright.

There was a great uproar amongst the crowd. Yells of delight greeted this great awakening of the Frenchman: and when the next round began every one thought that Smith must

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soon fall. Carpentier went for him again with animal ferocity. He leapt about the ring after him, sending in blow after murderous blow. Smith reeled and gasped and staggered and backed away after each shattering, smashing right had landed, but he still stood up and fought him like a man. It was a fine show of pluck. The man was badly hurt. Plenty of boxers would have dropped for a rest and even would have allowed themselves to be counted out, but not Jeff Smith. He was, as they say, " for it," and he knew that he was " for it." But he would go through with it.

The uproar increased. The spectators wanted to have the fight stopped, but without avail. The fight went on. Smith staggered in, and more by good luck than any sort of management, contrived to land two pitiful blows. His legs were hopelessly weak—he could hardly see, and yet he managed to cover his jaw, and, try as he would, with all his renewal of vigour, Carpentier could do everything he liked with his man save knock him out. It is necessary to make this quite plain. Smith looked as though he must at any moment drop down and stay down from sheer exhaustion.

A minute's rest. The last round.

Men are oddly and wonderfully made. Smith leapt from his chair just as his opponent had done a quarter of an hour before, strong, eager, ferocious. He tore across the ring at Carpentier, flung amazing blows at him, made desperate and frantic efforts to knock him out at the last minute. Carpentier was completely flabbergasted. He had never known anything like this to be possible. Smith's recovery was marvellous, not less wonderful than that. And indeed Jeff Smith was within sight of victory throughout that desperate last round. He landed a right-hander with all his diminished strength, and the Frenchman crumpled up and fell forward to the boards. A little more might behind the blow, a shade more elasticity in the arm that sent the blow, and Carpentier must have been counted out. But that was the end. Carpentier rose just as the bell rang for time. And the referee gave the fight to him. The decision was not popular even among Frenchmen—which is surprising, but strengthening to one's faith in human nature.

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CHAPTER XI

JACK DEMPSEY AND GEORGES CARPENTIER

CARPENTIER served in the French Flying Corps during the war, but though four years or more were taken from the best of his boxing life, he did not forget how to box. During the "gap" he engaged in no recorded contests, but no doubt did a certain amount of sparring. He had gained weight and lost no ground when the war ended. During 1919 and 1920, he fought five times, knocking out five men, including Dick Smith, Joe Beckett, and Battling Levinsky. Meanwhile, in July, 1919, Jack Dempsey had knocked out Jess Willard in three rounds for the World's Championship, and Carpentier challenged him.

"Jack Dempsey" is a *nom de guerre*, presumably taken (since there is as yet no copyright in names) from that older Jack Dempsey who began boxing in the early eighties, and lost the World's Middle-weight title to Bob Fitzsimmons, who knocked him out in fifteen rounds in 1891.

The new Jack Dempsey was born in 1895, and his record shows that until the end of 1920 he had fought upwards of sixty contests, fifty-eight of which he won, mainly by knocking his opponents out in the first or second rounds. He weighs 13½ stone, and stands just a shade under 6 feet. That is to say, he was a stone and a half heavier than Carpentier; much longer in reach. Dempsey is a very miracle of strength and hardness.

It seemed an absurd match. If an animal analogy may be allowed, it was like a young leopard against a gorilla. There are, of course, innumerable accidents in boxing, chance blows and slight injuries which turn the tide of battle, an "off" day, a fault in training; but it may be laid down as a general rule that

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when character and strength are equal the man with the more skill wins, when skill and strength are equal, character wins, when character and skill are equal, strength wins. So it was now. Both Carpentier and Dempsey were natural fighters, both were scientific boxers, though Carpentier was more skilled than his opponent, both wanted to win, but Dempsey was immensely stronger than the Frenchman.

The contest took place at New Jersey, U.S.A., on July 2, 1921. A very small ring was used, no more than eighteen feet square. The number of rounds was limited to twelve, but it was recognised beyond the possibility of doubt that so many as twelve would not be required to settle the matter.

The moving pictures of the event show Carpentier sitting in his corner, nodding and smiling while his gloves are being put on. His grin is wide. Then with the suddenness of the camera's own shutter, it ceases. For an instant the whole face is still, the mouth closes in thin-lipped anxiety, the eyes are set, and when you see the smile break out again you know that it is deliberate, not spontaneous. In fact Georges Carpentier was acutely nervous. Who, of his size and in his shoes, would not have been? You have but to glance at the man in the opposite corner, and you shake at the very thought of being in Carpentier's shoes at that moment. Thirteen and a half stone may mean very little; it may mean a hulking fellow who can't hit, let alone take punishment: it may mean a hulking fellow who can hit hard, but who can do nothing else. But the thirteen and a half stone of Dempsey meant a man in perfect condition, who could hit as few men can, who was extraordinarily hard and strong and almost impossible to hurt. Thirteen and a half stone of bone and muscle, not bone and muscle and fat. No fat at all. All hard stuff; not easy rippling muscle like Carpentier's, but very solid and tough and extremely serviceable.

Dempsey had left himself unshaven for several days, so that the skin of his face should not be tender, thereby gaining, besides, a horribly malign appearance. And he scowled, and when the two of them stood up he made Carpentier look a

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little man. Dempsey was not popular in America owing to his avoidance of military service during the war. Seeing him in the ring, unless the photographic films have lied, he looked the very incarnation of sullen rage and brute force. In private life he is an amiable man, fresh-faced and modest. He had much more than brute force: he was a skilled and terrific basher. Strength for strength, Dempsey could, as you might say, "eat" Carpentier.

And they gave rather the appearance of the child and the ogre in the ring. Carpentier seemed unable to defend himself against the shattering onslaught of the American, and there was much clinching in the first round. The smaller man greatly surprised the spectators by going in and fighting at once, instead of trying to keep away and let Dempsey tire himself, which seemed to be the obvious course to pursue. He had not the strength to stop the majority of Dempsey's blows, especially the upper-cuts which came crashing through his guard. He tried the trick of boxing with his chin on the big man's chest, but even so his body suffered the more. It was, as a matter of irrelevant fact, Carpentier who scored the first hits, a left on the face and an upper-cut with the right, neither of which had any effect at all. During a clinch the champion gave his opponent a dig in the stomach which reduced his strength immediately. This he followed by a hard, very short blow on the back of the head, given whilst Carpentier was holding close. From the position in which two men stand in a clinch, such a blow cannot be given with the whole weight of the body. The glove can travel only five or six inches, and the body's weight cannot in that attitude be swung behind the arm. I have seen in clumsy boxing a man knocked clean out by a blow on the back of the head or neck by an ordinary full swing, aimed for the jaw, which the victim has protected by bringing his head forward, but not far enough forward. But a man of Dempsey's strength can make the short blow a very serious one when frequently repeated: and he repeated it many times on Carpentier.

Next he landed on the Frenchman's body with both hands. Emerging from a clinch Carpentier was seen to be bleeding from

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the nose. Then he swung hard at Dempsey's jaw and missed it. He had done no damage at all yet.

The second round was the most interesting in a very short fight. Carpentier crouched and jumped in with a left and right which landed on the head, but did not hurt the American. Carpentier hit again and missed. They clinched, and Dempsey sent in some more body-blows, pulling his man about the ring as he pleased, so long as he held. Then Carpentier backed away, and for an instant Dempsey's guard was down. The Frenchman halted in his retreat and shot a left hook in at the jaw. It was beautifully timed, a fine seizing of a small opportunity, a test of courage. And for Carpentier it was a great moment, a triumph of presence of mind: thought and action were wellnigh simultaneous. The blow seemed to shake Dempsey, and the huge crowd yelled with delight for the Frenchman, who immediately followed up his advantage. He had been hurt: he was weak, but he had taken his opportunity. That left was a hard blow, almost as hard as any he had ever struck. It was a wonderful chance: he had never thought he would be able to get in a blow like that, not after that first round. And now he would hit again, and he swung his right hand to Dempsey's jaw with all his might. But there was just a shade of flurry about that blow, and Carpentier did a thing he had not done for years: he swung his hand in its natural position, instead of twisting it over a little in its passage so that the finger knuckles struck the jaw: and the natural position made the impact fall upon the thumb. It was a beginner's mistake, but a frequent one when hot haste makes a man a little wild. Carpentier felt a sharp and agonising pain, but he struck again with his right, and this time he missed. Dempsey came forward and this time it was he who clinched, before attacking the French man's body again with his half-arm blows. And so the round ended.

What had happened was this: the full weight of Carpentier's blow falling on his thumb broke it and sprained his wrist. Dempsey shook his head and retired a step or two, and declared afterwards that he could not remember the blow. This is unlikely.

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He added that he might possibly have been caught when he was off his balance and so appeared to stagger. We may say for certain that the two blows, left and right combined, would have knocked any other man out. Certainly their effect upon the champion was trivial; though it is said that some one in his corner stretched out his hand for the smelling-salts, so as to be ready in case Dempsey came to his corner dazed.

The third round began, and Carpentier retreated as his opponent advanced on him. He knew too much now to attempt to "mix it," he would keep away. His only chance lay in Dempsey's tiring himself. He said afterwards that those two blows in the second were the best he could strike, and when he saw that they had failed he lost heart. "Dempsey gave me a blow, just afterwards, on the neck which seemed to daze me," he said.

Well, there are various degrees of losing heart. Carpentier may have realised that his task was hopeless, but he meant to go on. He landed a right at very long range with no power behind it to speak of, and Dempsey clinched, before sending home several of his rib-shattering half-arm blows. Carpentier's strength was going. These body-blows had hurt him severely, and their effect was sickening and lasting. Then Dempsey hit him a little higher, just under the heart, and the Frenchman's knees gave. He was nearly down, but managed to keep on his legs until the end of the round. But he was looking ill as he went to his corner.

Directly the fourth round began the sullen giant crouched and attacked Carpentier with all his strength, driving him fast before him round the ring until he had him in a corner. Dempsey swung his right and Carpentier ducked inside it. They were close together, and he had to submit to a bout of in-fighting, trying to force his way out of the corner. But Dempsey got him close up against the ropes and sent in a very hot right to the jaw. Carpentier collapsed upon hands and knees. The ring, his antagonist, the faces peering at him from the level of the stage, were misty and vague. There was only one idea in his mind, only one thing that he could hear. He must get up somehow

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before the referee counted ten. . . . Four—five—(he was not done yet)—six—seven—(he must stay down as long as possible)—eight—nine. And at that Carpentier jumped up quickly and flung up his arms to guard against the inevitable rush. It was no good. He did not know his own weakness. Dempsey just pushed his arms aside, feinted with his left, and sent his right crashing to the heart. Again Carpentier fell, and this time he was counted out.

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CHAPTER XII

GEORGES CARPENTIER AND GEORGE COOK

After his defeat by Dempsey, Carpentier did not fight again until he met George Cook, the Australian, at the Albert Hall, on January 12th, 1922. In the World's Championship contest he had been badly hurt: and a beating such as he had then might well have produced a lasting effect. It was, then, interesting to watch him to see if his previous downfall would manifestly alter his demeanour in the ring. But though it is not to be doubted that some of his behaviour arose from motives of policy, there was, genuinely, no sign of worry upon his boyish and almost preposterously unpugilistic face. Coming into the ring there was an elaborate nonchalance in the Frenchman's mien which was intended to impress his opponent. With genial gravity Carpentier himself wound his bandages about his hands before drawing on his black gloves: and instead of remaining in his corner he moved his stool to a position in the ring more generally commanded by the spectators.

Cook is a man without any particular record in this country, though he was Heavy-weight Champion of Australia. By beating Carpentier he would have become Champion of Europe, and would, of course, have bounded into considerable fame. Wise after the event, large numbers of a critical public have observed that the result was for ever certain. But that is unfair to Cook, who showed himself to be a boxer by no means despicable, and who most emphatically had the better of one round out of the four. He was a stone heavier than his man, though this considerable difference was not plainly observable when they stripped. Cook was just a shade "beefy," but he was strong and well. He looked across the ring with astonishment at the form of his

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antagonist: for Carpentier is—a Greek bronze, dark-skinned, beautifully proportioned, covered with easy, flowing muscle, a sight to stir the hearts of older athletes with vain regret.

The huge hall was full. Large numbers of women were present, both English and French, and these called to mind the amusing discussions in and out of newspapers, before the war, as to the propriety of admitting female spectators to "Gladiatorial displays." Indeed in one Correspondence Column under the title, "Should Ladies Watch Boxing Contests?" an irascible old sportsman declared that the question did not arise, as no lady would do such a thing. Without entering at length into a question which is not widely interesting, I would ask what hope there was for a gentility which depends upon obedience to a perfectly trivial convention, involving no question of right or wrong, manners, or even what we usually mean by "decorum"? In those days of 1914, before war broke out, and when the "boxing boom" was at its height, a woman whom it is unnecessary to call a "lady," old enough also to have recognised for what they were and to despise many transient correctitudes of fashion, observed: "If my daughter *likes* to go and see two nasty men with hairy chests knocking each other about, why shouldn't she?" And, really, that is all there is to be said on the subject.

To return to what the ladies watched, rather than exploring the "quite niceness" of their watching it—a very desperate encounter was not expected: but, provided that he doesn't knock his man out in the first fifty or sixty seconds, Carpentier is always worth seeing.

The first round was level. Cook boxed well, particularly at close quarters, and the Frenchman appeared hesitating and tentative in all his movements. Early in the next round Cook sent out a quick and tremendous swing which, with greater quickness, Carpentier avoided, dancing right away from it. Then, a little later, the same thing happened on Carpentier's side. Throughout this round Cook succeeded for the most part in keeping close to his man and in dealing him out short but powerful punches

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on the back of the neck and head, in imitation of Dempsey, but without his power. From Cook these blows seemed to trouble his antagonist not at all. That was certainly Cook's round. Whether the considerable margin of points in his favour was entirely due to Carpentier's ringcraft is not certain. He was anxious to sum up the situation and thoroughly to take the measure of Cook before committing himself. It is quite possible that he deliberately gave something away in that round, being confident that his gift could do him no serious harm: but if he did so, I am inclined to suppose that he got more than he reckoned upon.

The third round was Carpentier's in about the same degree as the second had been Cook's. His hesitation had completely gone, and he did nothing without meaning to, and no intention of his was frustrated by his opponent. He knew all about Cook now. He was a powerful hitter at short range, a good in-fighter, and he was strong. But he was much the slower of the two.

When he has really settled to his work Carpentier crouches lightly and elegantly, with no rigid and inflexible guard, but both hands ready, both arms loose and lithe, to supply whatever need the next moment may demand. At the beginning of the fourth round Cook went for him with plenty of pluck and determination, and did his utmost to keep close. But Carpentier hit and got away, side-stepped, danced lightly on his toes, refusing to fight at close quarters. Every now and again a clinch seemed imminent, and the Frenchman darted away out of reach, leaving, as it were, a lightning blow behind him. Suddenly, as the Australian tried to force him into his own corner, he sent in a right to Cook's jaw, through his guard, at very long range and with extraordinary dexterity. It was the kind of blow that could only be landed effectively by a boxer of the utmost possible skill. For one thing it was exquisitely timed, coming in not straight, but without the elbow being markedly bent, striking the right place, the glove turning over as it struck, and avoiding Cook's guardian left with the most delicate precision. For another, few boxers could land any blow save a wide swing from the

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position Carpentier was in with sufficient weight behind it to do much damage. It was, on his part, a triumph of speed, of real boxing, not according to confining rules, but according to science applied to occasion with the utmost ingenuity and agility. It is worth going a long way to see a blow like that struck. No one should need the fantastic explanation of Carpentier's or Descamps's hypnotic powers if he will but watch the boxer with a quick and vigilant eye.

There have been, perhaps, better men of a less weight from the strictly scientific point of view, but as a skilled heavy-weight Carpentier is peerless. Unfortunately, as we know, science is not all that is needed in the ring, and Carpentier was utterly routed by Dempsey—a good boxer, but not nearly so good a boxer—because he was a positive phenomenon of size and strength.

That beautiful right was probably enough to beat Cook, who immediately fell forward. But Carpentier hit him again, bending to do so, just before he reached the floor. By the rules it was a fair blow, because the man was not technically "down" —neither glove nor knee quite touched the floor. It was, however, a very near thing. There was a good deal of excitement and uproar at the moment, and at least one highly competent judge fully believed the blow to have been a foul, and that the Frenchman should have been disqualified. But he was sitting immediately behind Carpentier and could not get a perfectly clear view.

Instantaneous photographs, displayed afterwards, show that Carpentier, by the narrowest possible margin, was on the right side. But it was an unfortunate ending to a most instructive encounter. For the question remains—did he strike deliberately, or was he overcome by the excitement of the moment, as so many other boxers, even of his experience, have been overcome before? Neither alternative leaves us with complete ease in retrospect: for to lose your head is bad boxing, while to take the uttermost advantage of the exact letter of the rule is, in such a case, questionable sportsmanship.

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Photo: "Sport and General."

Georges Carpentier and Jack Dempsey.

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CHAPTER XIII

LITTLE MEN

FROM the spectator's point of view much of the interest of boxing (and almost all of it in amateur boxing), is purely dramatic. You can thoroughly enjoy—at least I can, and there are others—a really good fight apart from any science that may be displayed. For enjoyment of skill alone is in another dimension. Of course, there must always be enough science to enable the boxers to fight cleanly and tidily and without the appearance of two angry windmills. But greatly as science improves the complete interest and enjoyment of a fight, that kind of interest remains separate. For the admiration of skill appeals to your head, the drama, largely to your heart. And the drama in boxing arises from the fact that the encounter is a personal one, that two men are trying to hurt each other, at least physically to overcome each other (which amounts to the same thing) and to prevent the other from hurting, from dominating. There is no other sport in which the sense of personal combat is so manifest.

And it is partly because of this dramatic interest that heavy-weights—big men—have, as a rule, throughout two hundred years, attracted greater attention than the little men, except, of course, when little men have fought with big ones. Roughly, it is like this: if you want to see scientific boxing you choose a fight between feather or bantam-weights, if you want to see a good slogging match (but tempered with science, always) you choose a fight between middle or heavy-weights, preferably the latter. Of course, bantam-weights often do slog—much oftener indeed than do heavy-weights box twenty rounds of unexceptionable excellence. But I suppose there is magnificence in sheer bigness, and we like to see the big men fight. And that is

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why, for the most part, I have chosen heavy-weight encounters to represent the various periods in the history of the Ring.

It is impossible, or at any rate quite impracticable, to mention every boxer; it is not even practicable to mention more than a few. I should like to have described the fights of many of the lesser men in point of size—far better boxers, most of them, than almost any heavy-weight that ever lived. Names topple out of recent memory at random—Billy Plimmer, Pedlar Palmer, Joe Bowker, Charles Ledoux, Johnny Summers, Tancy Lee, Johnny Basham, hosts of them. But there is one name that simply cannot be avoided in any book about any sort of boxing, the name of one of the best feather-weights and one of the fairest fighters that ever lived—Jem Driscoll.

Driscoll, who was formerly Feather-weight Champion of England, having won the Lonsdale Belt outright by three successful contests, had all the natural gifts of the boxer. His weight was 9 stone, or, at all events, generally within easy reach of it; his height 5 feet 6 inches. He was beautifully proportioned, slim, muscular, with the appearance of an all-round athlete. His science was unrivalled, and he was a perfect exponent of what one may still call the English style of boxing; that is, the style based upon the upright position and the conspicuous use of the straight left lead. Driscoll is Irish by extraction and Welsh by birth, and he loved fighting for fighting's sake from his earliest childhood. He went in for and won various boys' competitions at Cardiff, and, later, travelled with a booth; his only instructor being experience.

His two contests at the National Sporting Club with Spike Robson, of Newcastle, for the English Feather-weight Belt, are worth a brief note in order to show Driscoll at the height of his power. Robson was three or four years older, but a very tough customer, with any amount of pluck. The first match, which took place on April 18th, 1910, had been keenly anticipated for a long time beforehand, if only because everything in which Driscoll had a hand was worth seeing. You always knew where you were with Driscoll. He always hit clean, and for choice, straight.

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There was never any clinching to avoid punishment, never any getting on the " blind side " of the referee.

The first three rounds were level. Robson was a good boxer, a keen fighter, but he was neither so quick with his hands or feet as Driscoll. However, it was he who landed the first considerable blow in the fourth round, striking heavily on his opponent's eye. In the fifth round he did a very foolish thing. There was something about his gay, elegant, upright and good-looking antagonist which irritated him. Driscoll was so indifferent, so imperturbable. He would smash him, he would spoil his face for him. The instant the bell rang for time he would catch Driscoll before he was clear of his corner, before, in fact, he was ready. That was the way to smash him—to give him no time to take up his position in the middle of the ring, with his left foot and arm out, nicely balanced on his toes. He'd show him. And he charged furiously head down across the ring like a terrier after his best enemy. And Jem Driscoll merely waited, until Robson was almost on him and then coolly stepped aside. It was beautifully done—no haste, no exertion, only the exactly right judgment of time. And Spike Robson couldn't recover himself—he was going much too fast for that—and was brought up by crashing into the stool which the seconds had not yet been able to remove from Driscoll's corner.

The edge of the stool cut his scalp severely as, from the fact that Robson was prematurely bald, was immediately obvious. He was half dazed, and had only sense for the rest of that round to clinch and lean on his opponent. The referee had to caution him severely for doing so. He had somewhat recovered in the next round, and in the seventh he was boxing well, though he had suffered a considerable shock. And Driscoll was boxing better, and would have been, I would venture to say, in any case and without the accident to handicap his antagonist. In the eleventh round Robson showed an inclination again to take a rest by leaning on his man in a clinch, and the referee observed with noticeable firmness. " Robson, I shall not tell you again." And when they were once more at long range Driscoll sent in six blows, one

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after another with lightning speed and almost without a return. Such blows as these may not have been each very hard, but their cumulative effect was fatiguing and depressing. Robson got a very warm time in the next two rounds; but he was thoroughly game, and kept on returning to the fight every time that Driscoll drove him away at the end of his long left. To the spectator who does not watch a fight of this kind, between two small men, with a very vigilant eye, the end often comes with surprising abruptness. In this case, Robson had been getting a much worse time than it seemed to any but the most careful observer. Driscoll had done as he liked with him latterly, and instead of his blows gradually losing power, in spite of the fact that he had a cold and was not in the best possible condition, they were all the harder because weariness in the other man had made them safer, the openings more patent. At the beginning of the fifteenth round, Driscoll sent in a sharp left hook, followed immediately with a right, and Robson tumbled forward to the floor. He rose very slowly, needing all his determination to do so, and as Driscoll sent him down again, the referee stopped the fight. Robson was much more hurt than, until the last minute, he seemed: and it was some minutes before he fully recovered his senses.

The second encounter between these men, on January 30th, 1911, was a much shorter affair. Driscoll on this occasion was in perfect condition, and he knew the worst of Robson. To begin with, he boxed with extraordinary speed, and though his blows were light, they were many. There was an admirable example of his powers in the second round, for he sent over a right hook with great power, which Robson dodged, and which, had it been struck by a clumsier boxer, would certainly have left him clean open to a counter; but when Robson's counter came in, as it did with commendable speed, Driscoll's right was back in its place to guard it. Beyond that failure, Driscoll made no effort to knock his man out until the fifth round. He contented himself with left, left, left, not very hard but very wearing. Then in the fifth round he became a fighter again: and before Robson knew he was there he fell before a right-hander on the point of

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the jaw. Through the sixth round Driscoll, who never took a situation for granted and ever remained careful until he had been proclaimed the winner, boxed hard, but gave no chances. Left, right—left, right: his blows nearly all landed, and Robson's blows were growing feeble and wild. In the seventh round he was palpably done, and Driscoll hit him as he liked, finally sending him down for six seconds. In the next round the referee decided that Robson had been hit enough. Towards the end Driscoll had been holding back and trying not to hurt his opponent. And that was Driscoll "all over."

In writing of Driscoll, it is fitting that an international contest of his should be described in which he was matched against the Feather-weight Champion of France, Jean Poésy. This fight took place towards the end of Driscoll's career, on June 3rd, 1912, at the National Sporting Club.

In his quiet way, Driscoll was confident of beating Poésy. They had seen each other, though not in the ring, but the English fancied his own chances merely from the "cut of his jib." They were equal in height and weight, but Driscoll had the advantage of long experience. True, he was over thirty, but before the fight he declared that he could hit as hard and stay as well as ever he could.

So they entered the ring—the young Frenchman and the veteran. As ever, Driscoll showed that he was the master of scientific fisticuffs: he was wonderfully quick, and he could still take hard knocks without showing a sign. Poésy was no novice: he could box well and was not so foolish as to underestimate his opponent, as many a young 'un would have done. He began on the defensive, so that Jem Driscoll had to carry the war into the enemy's country, and once more he showed he could outfight as well as outgeneral a good youth. There was never a question as to who would win, and in the end Driscoll left the ring without a mark, without having received a single damaging blow. All the same, it was an interesting fight, because of Poésy's pluck and the English champion's really amazing skill, which showed no falling off from his old high standard. He kept Poésy at long

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range, never leaving an opening for a knock-out blow, which the Frenchman soon saw was his only chance; never clinching or hugging. It is a pity that more men did not profit by his example. Poésy tried to get at Driscoll's body. He had beaten Digger Stanley like that. But Driscoll understood in-fighting too, though for choice he boxed at long range. In the tenth and eleventh rounds Poésy woke up and fought like a little fiend. Some one called out from the crowd, "When Poésy does take it into his head to get a move on, you'll see something." But all the spectators saw was a ferocious, game, and persevering attack coolly frustrated; and the more the Frenchman attacked, the more he left himself open, so that Driscoll was now hitting harder and oftener than before. Poésy was in beautiful condition, and began the twelfth round with unabated ardour. He dashed at Driscoll and landed a really hard straight left on his jaw. That made Driscoll think for a moment, and he decided that it would not be well to risk too many of that sort. Almost immediately afterwards Poésy coming in, left himself open, and Driscoll knocked him clean off his feet with a right on the chin. The Frenchman gallantly struggled up in five seconds, obviously dazed. Driscoll feinted and dodged about this way and that, so that it was impossible to tell whence the next blow would come, and presently sent over another right which knocked Poésy out of time . . . eight, nine, ten! Then Driscoll bent down and picked him up and carried him to his corner.

Not at any weight nor at any time was the Championship of England held by a better boxer or a straighter man.

One other little man—the littlest of all—must be mentioned, because, in the whole history of boxing there has never been any one quite like him—Jimmy Wilde, called in his younger days "The Tylorstown Terror." This minute Welshman was born in 1892, and stands just over 5 feet 3 inches, and his weight is, at the age of thirty, recorded as 7 stone 6 lb. The photograph of him reproduced as an illustration to this book, suggests many things, but certainly not a bruiser who has knocked out alone (not to mention the more laborious method of beating opponents)

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over a hundred men, and who has fought several hundred battles. To see him, in or out of the ring, to observe his pallor and square-shouldered fragility, makes his record seem like a rather foolish fairy-story. He used to give stones away in weight where you would think he could hardly spare ounces. It is all very well for men like Tom Sayers, or Carpentier, to give away a little: they were fine strong men. But you don't expect a chaffinch to attack an albatross.

Wilde is beautifully made in little and his strength is sheerly amazing, his hitting power, not only in relation to his size, terrific. He is a highly skilled boxer, but the might of his blows is almost magical. It is only the body's weight behind the striking hand which makes a blow really hard—and what is seven stone?

Of course, Jimmy Wilde is a fighter by instinct, he enjoys a good mill, he has an abundant virility. His style is a little reminiscent of Driscoll's, from whom he learned something in his youth. His ways are mainly his own, and he adapts his methods with wonderful cleverness to the needs of his size. To guard blows of a heavier man would soon wear him out. So he guards very little. He avoids. When an opponent tries to hit him, he is out of reach, just an inch beyond the extended arm of his antagonist.

Titles in the ring mean very little, but in Wilde's case "Fly-weight Champion of the World" is not to be despised. His contest with Alf Mansfield in May, 1919, at the Holborn Stadium, is worth a word, as showing the sort of task that this midget has repeatedly undertaken for the last ten or twelve years. Mansfield weighed 8 stone 4 lb., and stood half a head taller—sturdy, strong, a good boxer. In the second round Wilde went for him like a little fiend, and knocked him down for nine seconds. On rising, Mansfield could only hug his man to avoid the punishment which Wilde seemed literally to pour upon him. Mr. Corri, the referee, stopped the holding, and Mansfield, somewhat recovered, stood up and boxed pluckily. But the midget's pace was amazing. He hit and hit again, one hand following the other at such a rate that the eye could scarcely follow, while it was quite impossible to count his blows. Mansfield was bewildered but

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brave, a good boxer and fast by ordinary standards, but dead slow with Wilde. And yet his hitting *as* hitting was worth more if only he could plant the blows. In the third round he put in a right which astonished his man and hurt him: and Wilde was much more careful after that. But it was Wilde who wore him out by oft-repeated blows, so that in the eleventh round he was unsteady on his feet, in the twelfth fell from sheer weakness, whilst in the thirteenth, after two severe rights, each of which knocked him down, Mr. Corri very properly decided that he had been hurt enough.

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CHAPTER XIV

AN AFTERTHOUGHT

THE Prize-Ring served its turn and passed; and modern boxing, roughly, fills the gap. At present we do not see why modern boxing should not go on indefinitely. For all that people say human nature has changed, does change, will persist in changing, and—we dare hope—for the better. By modern standards the Prize-Ring was brutal, just as the execution of young lads for sheep-stealing was brutal. The same issue of the *Times* in June, 1833, which reported the acquittal at the Hertford Assizes of Deaf Burke for the manslaughter of Simon Byrne (See Chapter XIV, Part I.), informed its readers that a man found guilty of stealing spoons to the value of 27s. had been sentenced to transportation for life. Human nature has rebelled against the greater brutality as it did against the less. And war is the ultimate expression of brutality in man, and as we have seen only too lately, a brutality which carried to its logical conclusion (or very nearly) surpasses anything in that sort that mankind has been guilty of throughout the ages. A case, you say, against the truth or hope or possibility of change in human nature? Not quite; for human consciousness did, even before the German war, begin to realise what war would mean, and since then has made, is making, genuine efforts to withstand the tide of what pessimists regard as an inevitable tendency.

But apart from war in which we now know that "fair play" is ridiculously impossible, a little friendly hurting of each other in a roped ring and cold blood will do no harm to any two men. Not as a preparation for the hardships of warfare, not necessarily as a means of self-defence, but in view of a fine ideal of physical fitness, the strain and pain of violent athletics should be perpetuated.

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And this, apart from the fun of the thing (which after all matters most) is the excuse and reason for amateur boxing. So let boxing be regarded as a sport, and let us leave it at that.

Old prejudices live with extraordinary vigour: and boxing —the very fact of it—the peaceful and positively harmless encounter of two men with well-padded gloves stirs the deepest rancour still. We are not surprised at this rancour in people who are not English, French, or American: most of us have to take their point of view for granted, because we find it so difficult to capture. We think that bull-fights are barbarous, and a friend of mine who organised an amateur boxing competition in Monte Video and tried to hire the bull-ring for the purpose was prohibited by the Uruguayan authorities because boxing was—barbarous. You come up against a brick wall sometimes, and you can't see through it, so it's not the slightest good trying to explain the plants which grow on the other side.

But in England, and in America too, the prejudices of the "righteous overmuch," in fact, the prejudices of the Puritan tradition against the Prize-Ring have lived on to regard modern boxing in a similar light. My personal prejudice against overmuch righteousness and the Puritan tradition make the gist of my researches into the history of the Prize-Ring and of professional boxing a very nasty pill to swallow, very painful to digest. I don't know that I ever hoped to disprove calumnies, for I had always supposed that there was no reason, but a mere love of softness and Pleasant-Sunday-Afternoon respectability behind these objections to boxing. But, as a matter of fact, I have found, to my disgust, that there is much to be said for the "respectable" view—not, of course, on Puritan grounds, but both on humane grounds and in the cause of good sportsmanship. I believe that sport to-day (I don't say "amateur sport" because I am unable to recognise as sport any pastime that is not, in its true sense, "amateur") is better and finer and more chivalrous than it has ever been. It is, as a rule, fair—quixotically fair very often, and the more quixotic it is the better. Where a good sportsman could

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win a fight within the rules, but risks the chance of losing because, on a particular occasion, he is not satisfied that the letter of the rules is adequate, he is behaving quixotically, and as no one suffers but himself, his quixoticism doesn't matter. A game is only a game.

We might almost define sportsmanship as quixotry, the giving of something for nothing. The word amateur in other relations has become derisive, and has lost its genuine meaning. But an amateur in sport is still recognised as one who loves an occupation for its own sake. He loves it so much that he will deny himself softer pleasures in order to be proficient, and is prepared to undergo serious hardship in its pursuit.

In an affair of life and death, sportsmanship is not involved. We try very hard indeed to make out that it is or that it ought to be, but a man who obeys the rules of—say—the Amateur Boxing Association when he is attacked in a dark lane by a ruffian with half a brick, will have no tribute to his wisdom in any obituary notice written by me.

Sport to-day is beautifully fair. Not so, invariably, are professional athletics.

The Prize-Ring, by its rules, the application of its rules, and the disregard of its rules was what ordinarily intelligent and humane people nowadays call brutal. The professional boxing contest is seldom that, though, as we have seen, individual cases of deliberate cruelty have been known. The object amongst the majority of professional pugilists nowadays is not the enjoyment of a good contest and the money for a contest fairly won, but the money alone for a contest won anyhow. The average pro. is quite happy so long as the referee leaves him alone. He will do anything the referee lets him. What, he asks, is that official for? He is there to see fair play, and to stop the boxer if he does wrong.

But apart from the actual boxing, much connected with its "promotion" and management is so nauseously vulgar, false, unfair, and dishonest, that remaining prejudices based on that foundation are not unintelligible.

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APPENDIX

Rules of the Ring

as revised by the

Pugilistic Benevolent Association

1. That the ring shall be made on turf, and shall be four and twenty feet square, formed of eight stakes and ropes, the latter extending in double lines, the uppermost line being four feet from the ground, and the lower two feet from the ground. That in the centre of the ring a mark be formed, to be termed a scratch; and that at two opposite corners, as may be selected, spaces be enclosed by other marks sufficiently large for the reception of the seconds and bottle-holders, to be entitled "the corners."

2. That each man shall be attended to the ring by a second and a bottle-holder, the former provided with a sponge, and the latter with a bottle of water. That the combatants, on shaking hands, shall retire until the seconds of each have tossed for choice of position; which adjusted, the winner shall choose his corner according to the state of the wind or sun, and conduct his man thereto, the loser taking the opposite corner.

3. That each man shall be provided with a handkerchief of a colour suitable to his own fancy, and that the seconds proceed to entwine these handkerchiefs at the upper end of one of the centre stakes. That these handkerchiefs shall be called "the colours"; and that the winner of the battle at its conclusion shall be entitled to their possession, as the trophy of victory.

4. That two umpires shall be chosen by the seconds or backers to watch the progress of the battle, and take exception to any breach of the rules hereafter stated. That a referee shall be

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chosen by the umpires, unless otherwise agreed on, to whom all disputes shall be referred; and that the decision of this referee, whatever it may be, shall be final and strictly binding on all parties, whether as to the matter in dispute or the issue of the battle. That the umpires shall be provided with a watch, for the purpose of calling time; and that they mutually agree upon which this duty shall devolve, the call of that umpire only to be attended to, and no person whatever to interfere in calling time. That the referee shall withhold all opinion till appealed to by the umpires, and that the umpires strictly abide by his decision without dispute.

5. That on the men being stripped, it shall be the duty of the seconds to examine their drawers, and if any objection arise as to the insertion of improper substances therein, they shall appeal to their umpires, who, with the concurrence of the referee, shall direct what alterations shall be made.

6. That in future no spikes be used in fighting boots except those authorised by the Pugilistic Benevolent Association, which shall not exceed three-eighths of an inch from the sole of the boot, and shall not be less than one-eighth of an inch broad at the point; and it shall be in the power of the referee to alter, or file in any way he pleases, spikes which shall not accord with the above dimensions, even to filing them away altogether.

7. That both men being ready, each man shall be conducted to that side of the scratch next his corner previously chosen; and the seconds on the one side and the men on the other, having shaken hands, the former shall immediately return to their corners, and there remain within the prescribed marks till the round be finished, on no pretence whatever approaching their principals during the round, under a penalty of 5s. for each offence, at the option of the referee. The penalty, which shall be strictly enforced, to go to the funds of the Association. The principal to be responsible for every fine inflicted on his second.

8. That at the conclusion of the round, when one or both of the men shall be down, the seconds and bottle-holders shall step forward and carry or conduct their principal to his corner,

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there affording him the necessary assistance; and that no person whatever shall be permitted to interfere in this duty.

9. That, at the expiration of thirty seconds (unless otherwise agreed upon) the umpire appointed shall cry "Time," upon which each man shall rise from the knee of his bottle-holder, and walk to his own side of the scratch unaided, the seconds and bottle-holders remaining at their corner; and that either man failing so to be at the scratch within eight seconds, shall be deemed to have lost the battle.

10. That on no consideration whatever shall any person be permitted to enter the ring during the battle, nor till it shall have been concluded; and that in the event of such unfair practice, or the ropes and stakes being disturbed or removed, it shall be in the power of the referee to award the victory to that man who in his honest opinion shall have the best of the contest.

11. That the seconds and bottle-holders shall not interfere, advise, or direct the adversary of their principal, and shall refrain from all offensive and irritating expressions; in all respects conducting themselves with order and decorum, and confine themselves to the diligent and careful discharge of their duties to their principals.

12. That in picking up their man should the seconds or bottle-holders wilfully injure the antagonist of their principal, the latter shall be deemed to have forfeited the battle on the decision of the referee.

13. That it shall be a "fair stand-up fight," and if either man shall wilfully throw himself down without receiving a blow, whether blows shall have previously been exchanged or not, he shall be deemed to have lost the battle; but that this rule shall not apply to a man who in a close slips down from the grasp of his opponent to avoid punishment, or from obvious accident or weakness.

14. That butting with the head shall be deemed foul, and the party resorting to this practice shall be deemed to have lost the battle.

15. That a blow struck when a man is thrown or down, shall

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be deemed foul. That a man with one knee and one hand on the ground, or with both knees on the ground shall be deemed down; and a blow given in either of those positions shall be considered foul, providing always, that when in such position, the man so down shall not himself strike or attempt to strike.

16. That a blow struck below the waistband shall be deemed foul, and that in a close, seizing an antagonist below the waist, by the thigh, or otherwise, shall be deemed foul.

17. That all attempts to inflict injury by gouging, or tearing the flesh with the fingers or nails, and biting, shall be deemed foul.

18. That kicking, or deliberately falling on an antagonist, with the knees or otherwise, when down, shall be deemed foul.

19. That all bets shall be paid as the battle-money, after a fight, is awarded.

20. That no person on any pretence whatever shall be permitted to approach nearer the ring than ten feet, with the exception of the umpires and referee, and the persons appointed to take charge of the water or other refreshments for the combatants, who shall take their seats close to the corners selected by the seconds.

21. That due notice shall be given by the stake-holder of the day and place where the battle money is to be given up, and that he be exonerated from all responsibility upon obeying the direction of the referee; and that all parties be strictly bound by these rules; and that in future all articles of agreement for a contest be entered into with a strict and willing adherence to the letter and spirit of these rules.

22. That in the event of magisterial or other interference, or in case of darkness coming on, the referee shall have the power to name the time and place for the next meeting, if possible on the same day, or as soon after as may be.

23. That should the fight not be decided on the day, all bets, instead of being drawn, shall be put together and divided, unless the fight shall be resumed the same week, between Sunday and Sunday, in which case the bets shall stand and be decided by the event. That where the day named in the articles for a fight to

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come off is altered to another day in the same week, bets shall stand. The battle-money shall remain in the hands of the stake-holder until fairly won or lost by a fight, unless a draw be mutually agreed upon.

24. That any pugilist voluntarily quitting the ring previous to the deliberate judgment of the referee being obtained, shall be deemed to have lost the fight.

25. That an objection being made by the seconds or umpire, the men shall retire to their corners, and there remain till the decision of the appointed authorities shall be obtained; that if pronounced "Foul" the battle shall be at an end, but if "Fair," "Time" shall be called by the party appointed, and the man absent from the scratch in eight seconds after shall be deemed to have lost the fight. The decision in all cases to be given promptly and irrevocably, for which purpose the umpires and referee should be invariably close together.

26. That if in a rally at the ropes a man steps outside the ring, to avoid his antagonist, or to escape punishment, he shall forfeit the battle.

27. That the use of hard substances, such as stones, or sticks, or of resin, in the hand during the battle, shall be deemed foul, and that on the requisition of the seconds of either man, the accused shall open his hands for the examination of the referee.

28. That where a man shall have his antagonist across the ropes in such a position as to be helpless, and to endanger his life by strangulation or apoplexy, it shall be in the power of the referee to direct the seconds to take their man away, and thus conclude the round, and that the man or his seconds refusing to obey the direction of the referee, shall be deemed the loser

29. That in any case where men on meeting in the P.-R., or at any subsequent period during the fight, shall retire from the scratch, or refrain from all attempts to fight for the space of five minutes, the referee shall give them an additional five minutes, and if at the expiration of that time no blow has been struck, or no attempt has been made to strike, he shall have the power

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of awarding the battle-money, or one moiety thereof, to the funds of the Association.[1]

30. That all stage fights be as nearly as possible in conformity with the foregoing rules.

[1] This rule is only binding on members of the P.B.A. or persons signing articles to fight under their rules, and was made to meet cases where men finding themselves equally matched should attempt, by standing and looking at one another, as has been sometimes the case, for half an hour at a time, to protract the battle till dark, and thus have an opportunity of making a draw.

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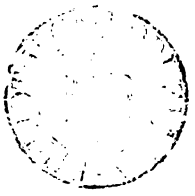

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